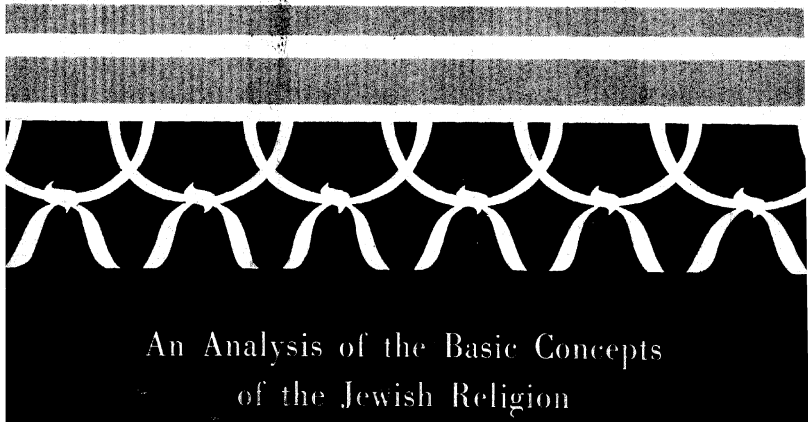


LEONARD B. GEWIRTZ

The
**AUTHENTIC
JEW and his
JUDAISM**



An Analysis of the Basic Concepts
of the Jewish Religion

THE AUTHENTIC JEW AND HIS JUDAISM

By Leonard B. Gewirtz

In this timely and challenging book a noted rabbi and educator has succeeded to present to American Jews a clear-cut definition of historic Judaism based on *Halachah* and the philosophic-rational tradition.

Drawing from his experiences in the American rabbinate; his contacts with Jewish students on the campus; his activities in the community — both Jewish and civic — Rabbi Gewirtz is convinced that “many American Jews are beginning to re-examine and relearn their Jewish values and insights.”

In THE AUTHENTIC JEW AND HIS JUDAISM, the author emphasizes that although the Jewish community is theologically divided into Orthodox and non-Orthodox viewpoints, it would be to the advantage of *Klal Yisroel* to maintain *dialogue* between them.

* * * *

“ . . . Because the creative literature in Jewish religious thought has not been blessed with abundance, the appearance of this volume takes on richer meaning. Here we have a valuable contribution with insights of the present that promise to endure far beyond the present”

From the Preface by
Dr. OSCAR Z. FASMAN

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THE AUTHENTIC JEW

The Inauthentic Jew

The Authentic Jew

The Road to Authentic Judaism

What Is Authentic Judaism?

THE AUTHENTIC JEW AND HIS JUDAISM

*An Analysis of the Basic Concepts
of the Jewish Religion*

By

LEONARD B. GEWIRTZ



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לזכר נשמת אבי החפיד

חנוך הענעד ב"ר יונה ז"ל

...רוחי אשר עליך, ודברי אשר שמתי בפיך, לא ימושו
מפיך ומפי זרעך, ומפי זרע זרעך...
(ישעיהו נט:כא)

*"... My words which I put into your mouth shall
not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth
of your children, nor from the mouth of your
children's children..."*

(ISAIAH 59:21)

Preface

Earnest thinking is not the universal hallmark of the American Jewish pulpit today. In his preaching and writing the rabbi is expected to attract worshippers and members, and the importance of achieving mass appeal drives him toward the pleasant tale, the light conversation, the shallow anecdote and the popular review of a motion picture spectacular.

How refreshing it is, therefore, to discover in Rabbi Leonard B. Gewirtz a spiritual leader who seeks out philosophical themes to point up the profound instruction of Judaism, who has developed in his congregants an appreciation for intellectual content, who dares to analyze the basic concepts of our faith under the penetrating searchlight of scholarship, both classical and contemporary! With reverence, sincerity and thoroughness he introduces the conclusions of psychology and sociology, of Talmudic erudition and historical research into the careful understanding of Torah ideals and their practical expression in the modern world. Not in flight from the problems of our times, nor in escape from their pressure, does our ancestral religion manifest its truth, argues Rabbi Gewirtz, but in an open encounter where the compelling force of divine counsel invests life with direction and significance.

From the pages of his book the author emerges, to borrow his adjective, an authentic spokesman for the traditional viewpoint in Judaism. Although he firmly adheres to his position in theology, he shuns the weapons of abuse and acrimony against those who differ with him. In measured and

logical terms he strives to earn at least the respect, if not the concurrence, of his readers so that they will acknowledge something deeper than nostalgia or inertia in a mitzvah-guided society.

Because the creative literature in Jewish religious thought has not been blessed with abundance, the appearance of this volume takes on richer meaning. Here we have a valuable contribution with insights of the present that promise to endure far beyond the present. It is encouraging to know that the author is a young man whose gifts will continue to add to the cultural diadem of Israel into a new generation.

OSCAR Z. FASMAN

*President, Jewish University of America,
Skokie, Illinois*

17 Adar 5721

5 March 1961

Foreword

Living in a period of vast cultural and social change, we find our moorings and guideposts shifting all about us. Because many of us realize that our civilization depends upon our spiritual and moral capacity to absorb and control our onrushing technical "know-how," there has developed at least an intellectual interest in religious values and institutions. For these and other general reasons, as well as specific Jewish factors (presented and analyzed in this book), many American-Jews are beginning to re-examine and re-learn their Jewish values and insights. However important the socio-political factors are for the interest in Judaism and revival of *Jewishness*, it is necessary to deepen and heighten this experience by giving it intellectual, emotional, and Jewish content and direction. By permitting this feeling and attitude to languish on its present level of vague sentimentality, a wonderful opportunity for worthy Jewish revival will slip by. The Jewish contribution to the accommodation of the spiritual and social *malaise* of our age will not be made. This book is being offered to my fellow American-Jews to help stimulate our Jewish revival in the right direction, and to raise it to a higher ethical and spiritual plane. It tries to make Judaism *personally* significant.

Being a Jew involves more than eating *gefilte* fish on Friday night, singing *zum gali gali* at a birthday party, or dancing a "frailechs" at a traifah Bar Mitzvah Party. What it means to be a Jew and also a mature-spiritual person is explained in this book. What an authentic Jew is, and how he is supposed to think and act, are explored from many different approaches.

Although I believe in normative, historic Judaism, and could have presented my convictions *deductively*, from Revelation downward to the Jew, I chose to begin *existentially*, from the Jewish person where he is, and to climb upward towards God and Revelation, *inductively*. This approach is in better harmony with our contemporary mood. For this reason, this book is entitled: *The Authentic Jew and His Judaism*. I begin with the *authentic* Jew, who wants to be a full Jew and a total human being, and lead him upward to further Jewish-historic insights. The value-judgments flow out of our humanist tradition, and find their highest social expression in the ideals of social democracy. The best guardian and source for these human values is the divine Biblical-Rabbinic heritage, now maintained by Traditional Judaism. Hence, when sacred texts are presented, they are not a point of departure, but an end point in a "logical" presentation of accepted value judgments.

In recent months, the world Jewish Community was rocked by a discussion, "Who is a Jew?" A related and equally difficult question for the non-Orthodox is "What is Judaism?" (See chapters I, IV, and V.) If scholars should agree to disagree on what is Judaism, the cohesive force in Jewish existence will not be Judaism but the negative force of external pressure. This condition would be unfortunate for Judaism. Constant attempts at reformulation and reinterpretation become essential for a living, unifying faith. This book is a humble contribution in this direction, with the hope that it will clarify areas of agreement and help convince the "liberals" of how much more they may accept historic doctrine and values. Although the Jewish community is *theologically* divided into Orthodox and non-Orthodox viewpoints, it would be to the advantage of *Klal Yisroel* to maintain *dialogue* between them. I believe that ultimately the non-Orthodox, in their honest desire to live full Jewish lives as authentic Jews,

will gradually accept a reformulated, reinterpreted statement of normative classic Judaism based on *Halachah* and the philosophic-rational tradition. For them, more than for the Orthodox who are convinced, this book was written.

The knowing reader will behold the ideas and thoughts of Saadia, Rambam, Halevi, and Rav Kook, although they may not be quoted; he will also recognize thoughts from Niebuhr, Fromm, Mumford, Sorokin and many others, even though he may not find their quotations. The influence of Isadore Epstein, Robert Gordis, Jacob Agus, and Mordecai Kaplan may also be felt. The *oral-tradition, torah sh'bal-peh*, of my two teachers, Dr. Meyer Waxman and Dr. Israel Efros, will also be in the final result. The influence of the College of the City of New York and the University of Chicago merge with the influence of my Yeshiva education. The catalytic influence of my father, may his memory be for a blessing, is found especially in the religious feeling and mood.

These chapters were originally presented as Lecture-Sermons to my congregation on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The lectures each year were devoted to a specific theme. Beginning in 1953-5714, the theme was the Authentic Jew; in 1954-5715, Jewish Ritual; in 1955-5716, Jewish Prayer; in 1956-5717, Halachah; in 1957-5718, God; in 1958-5719, Nature of Man; in 1959-5720, a Moral Purpose to Life. With the encouragement of my congregation, I continued to lecture on *Hashkofos* * (concepts) instead of giving the usual exhortatory sermon. Because a few of these lectures appeared as articles in Anglo-Jewish periodicals and were well-received, I am encouraged to have them printed. My congregation, too, believes they deserve a wider audience, and therefore decided

* All Hebrew transliterations follow the accepted Ashkenazic pronunciation, with the exception of popular expressions in use in Israel. Also, where transliterating the Kaumetz (aw) presented aesthetic difficulty, the simple a was used.

to have them published in book form. I am thankful to them for this further encouragement.

In editing the lecture into an essay, one is aware that what sounds well does not necessarily read well. To quote J. K. Galbraith, *The Liberal Hour*, ". . . in the matter of revision I have gone from opportunity to license. This is partly because lectures, like sermons, do not make books. No matter how resonant and uplifting they sound, at least to the lecturer, during delivery, they remain unimpressive in print." In my own transposition from delivery to print, I have had the assistance of Abraham Segal of Philadelphia and thank him for his critical reading. To Edward H. Bloch and Charles E. Bloch, for their technical assistance in the preparation of this volume; and to my father-in-law, Solomon Kerstein, also of the Bloch Publishing Company, who was of invaluable aid in many ways, I express my profound appreciation.

Achron, Achron, I want to thank my wife, Sarah Gitel, whose inspiration and intellectual companionship is felt on each page.

In presenting this book, the first of my literary labor, I pray in the words of Rav Saadia Gaon: "I implore in the name of God, exalted be He, every seeker of knowledge who studies this book to read it without bias, and to have in mind the same objective as I, and to desist from narrow-mindedness and conjecture and confutation, until he will have obtained benefit and have acquired profit by the power and might of Him, who teaches us what profits us . . ."

LEONARD B. GEWIRTZ

Adas Kodesch Shel Emeth Congregation

Wilmington, Delaware

Nisan 5721

April 1961

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THE AUTHENTIC JEW

The Inauthentic Jew

The Authentic Jew

The Road to Authentic Judaism

What Is Authentic Judaism?

The Inauthentic Jew

Jewish self-awareness is experienced today by almost all Jews. Maurice Samuels, novelist, critic, and lecturer, commented upon this fact in a recent article in the Hebrew quarterly, "*Megillot*." ¹ A generation ago, audiences attending his lectures used to pose questions like these: "Why should we Jews be different from other people?" "Why do we need Judaism at all in America?" The underlying feeling was: *Why* should I be a Jew? Audiences of our own generation do not ask the question *Why*? They ask, "*How* should I be a Jew?" Young parents of school age children especially are now seriously interested not in whether to be Jewish or not, but in the right *way* to be Jewish.

To help clarify this question and suggest some of the answers, we shall, in these chapters, discuss the character of two types of Jew—the inauthentic, and the authentic—and consider how we can move away from the former toward the latter, and so find ourselves genuinely on the road to Authentic Judaism. The terms authentic and inauthentic, of course, are typological. There is no such real person: we are all a mixture of authentic and inauthentic tendencies. These terms represent an "ideal" type, an imaginary picture designed to help us choose for ourselves the direction our lives are to take.

Inauthentic Jewish Behavior

"What characterizes the inauthentic Jews is that they deal with their Jewishness not by accepting it but by running

away from it . . . They try to deny their Jewishness—they underplay their Jewishness.”²

Examples of inauthentic Jewish behavior, of denial of one’s Jewishness, are all around us.

I was on the bus at ten minutes to eight, going to the morning *minyan* and carrying a Hebrew weekly, *Hadoar*. After a while I imagined people were staring at me. I looked at my Hebrew weekly which I held with the Hebrew letters exposed. Automatically, I turned it inside out, so that the other passengers could not see the Hebrew letters. That hiding of the Hebrew paper was an inauthentic act. I ran away from my Jewishness at that moment and tried to hide my identification with the “foreign” Hebrew letters.

The College of the City of New York, when I studied there, had a student body 70% Jewish. At lunch time the boys sat in the alcoves and seasoned their food with debate on all kinds of human problems. Many boys purchased their sandwiches at a cafeteria counter, the Jewish boys frequently ordering ham sandwiches, the non-Jewish boys, cheese and vegetable sandwiches. By this action, these Jewish boys dealt with their Jewishness in an *inauthentic* manner: they tried to hide themselves, to underplay their Jewishness.

At the Chanukah–Christmas season, Christians place their trees near the window and decorate their homes conspicuously. I ask many Jews, “Why don’t you place your Menorah on the window sill so others may see our festival?” The answer: “I don’t want to show them I’m different.” Needless to say, it is hardly a secret that the Ginsburgs on 39th Street are Jewish; they are trying to hide something that cannot and need not be hidden.

An intelligent Jewish mother *bentches licht* every Friday night over her silver candlesticks on the gas range in the kitchen. “Why,” she was asked, “don’t you place these beautiful candlesticks where they belong, on the dining room

table, so your neighbors may see it is your Sabbath?" She gave an inauthentic answer for an inauthentic action: "It is safer to put the candles near the sink and not on the dining room table where they might catch fire."

These four incidents are examples of inauthentic Jewish behavior. All of us are doubtless guilty of it at one time or another. But if a Jew acts in most of life's situations by running away from himself, from his Jewishness, we may call him an *inauthentic Jew*.

The Fully Inauthentic Jew

Why do Jews seek to hide their Jewishness? Why be ashamed of a vital part of their being? Why deny what their parents were, and a thousand generations before them?

Jews live in a Christian cultural environment. Festivals, literature, music, and art—all have a Christian bias. The days on which we rest and relax are Christian holidays. When we think of religion, we think not of our own, but of Christianity.

Because we relegate our own religious way of life to the background, many of us develop an apologetic attitude toward Jewishness. Our apology is made not before the non-Jew, but to ourselves; therein lies its tragedy. This feeling of apology for being Jewish does not come from discrimination or anti-semitic prejudice. In America today these have dwindled year by year. The typical Jew of today is successful, has economic security, is accepted; and yet, subconsciously, the inauthentic Jew apologizes to himself for being Jewish. This urge to run away from being Jewish arises from an inward inadequacy. It is a denial of self: the Jew, in his act of inauthenticity, denies that he comes from his own mother and father.

Here is the psychological explanation for running away

from Jewishness—the sick feeling of a Jewish inferiority complex. The inauthentic Jewish action stems from this feeling of *shame*. This is why I hid the Hebrew paper, why the Jewish college boys deliberately ordered ham, why the Jewish family did not display the Chanukah menorah or the Sabbath candles. The inauthentic Jew is filled with anxieties and fears about acting like a Jew. He feels secure only when he is faceless, nameless, depersonalized. The inauthentic Jew seeks to be not-himself.

You can appreciate what such a pattern of living can do, psychologically, to a normal person. When a person must daily go on living the shadow of existence, denying to himself a part of himself, that person is inwardly inauthentic. A Jew who succeeds in denying his Jewishness before non-Jews may get the job he is after or admittance into the country club of his heart's desire. He may fool the non-Jew, but the inauthentic Jew can never fool *himself*.

He thus becomes involved in an endless and tragic paradox. He desires to be not-himself—to be not-Jewish. But as he proceeds along this road of self-denial, he only reminds himself, with ever greater intensity, of what he really is. By inwardly trying to deny what he is, he constantly recalls what he is, because it is an inalienable Jewishness that he is denying.

This is the fully inauthentic Jew. There are, thank God, few of us so consistent in our inauthenticity.

Tainted Jews

There are other Jews who, while openly avowing their Jewishness, are nevertheless tainted by inauthenticity. By a kind of intellectual craftiness, they deny aspects of their Jewishness, drawing over them a silken curtain of confusion and hiding them behind theological disputations. They talk of

the "Universal Spirit of Judaism," a term they hope will eliminate the distinctive aspects of Jewish religion and all rites and beliefs that make Jews different. Why pray with hats? Pray without hats and be like everyone else! Why pray in Hebrew? Pray in English! Why celebrate Sabbath on the seventh day of the week? Celebrate it on the first day of the week! Why keep a *kosher* home or have a *mezuzah* on the door, and identify your home as Jewish? Discard these Jewish practices and make your home like any other! All these distinctively Jewish practices are "nationalistic," "parochial," "foreign" to the "universal spirit of Judaism."

Here we find inauthenticity actually raised to the level of a theology. The one-sided emphasis on the universal spirit of Judaism is an intellectual "gimmick," a rationalization for inauthenticity. Here are more examples.

This kind of inauthentic Jew wants to discard the Jewish uniform of prayer, the Talis, whose use makes Jewish worship so distinctive. In Judaism, every layman wears a vestment, not only the priest, and Jews are bidden to be a "Kingdom of priests and a holy nation."³ But if all Jews wear the Talis—even if only the rabbi wears the Talis—that makes us different. Therefore, the Talis must be discarded: Jews must not be "different." The argument offered in defense of this inauthentic behavior is this: Does it really make a difference to God if we pray with or without a Talis? Does it really matter to God what we eat, or what language we use to recite our prayers?

One of the most authentic musical sounds in Judaism is the call of the Shofar. It is a primeval sound, defying time and history. It comes to us from Abraham and Isaac. It conjures up the dramatic scene of Joshua rallying the battling Hebrew hosts. It is the Jewish call to repentance. An authentic sound—and "different." What does inauthentic Judaism do? It introduces the French horn or the cornet fitted

with a device to make it sound *like* the ancient Hebrew Shofar.

The Kol Nidre melody is our soul-stirring cry of repentance—truly an authentic Jewish hymn. But Judaism tainted with inauthenticity plays this melody on a violin on Yom Kippur night, turning moral anguish into a theatrical concert.

One could cite many other such examples of inauthentic behavior by Jews openly professing to be Jewish. The exponent of inauthentic Jewish theology is not as consistent in his running away from Jewishness as the fully inauthentic Jew. But the taint in him, the spot of inauthenticity, is easily recognized.

In Sum

The fully inauthentic Jew runs away from Jewishness. He is apologetic to himself and suffers from a Jewish inferiority complex. The partially inauthentic Jew taints his Jewish religion and theology by making them inauthentic.

What then is the authentic Jew? The Talmud gives us this axiom: "From the negative you may deduct what is positive." ⁴ The authentic Jew, therefore, does not run away from his Jewishness. He is not apologetic about it, and does not suffer from a Jewish inferiority complex. He does not rationalize his fear of difference or deform his religion until it becomes unrecognizable.

The Authentic Jew

The previous essay analyzed the inauthentic Jew: his psychology, his process of thinking, his behavior, and his Judaism.

Here, we continue to analyze the authentic Jew. As we have seen, he does not try to escape from his Jewishness, but lives to the full his being a Jew. He accepts his Jewishness as naturally as the air he breathes. A coward who "dies a thousand deaths," the inauthentic Jew is forever cringing; but the authentic Jew, who does not flee from the Jewish reality, faces his Jewishness boldly and gladly.

The Biological Level

First of all, the authentic Jew *makes* himself a Jew *lamrot hakol*—in the face of all and against all. He accepts the facts of life as they are. He accepts the bias of Christian culture and the superciliousness of the refined bigot. He accepts discrimination and even martyrdom. The authentic Jew is not concerned with what others might think or say, he does not cry, *Lamah Yomru Ha-goyim* ("What will the non-Jews say?")⁵ He does what comes naturally as a Jew. Anti-semitism, for him, is not a Jewish problem; it is a Christian problem.

Many new "converts" to Jewishness, and many Jewish "old-timers" too, realize that living a faceless existence is a living death. Jewishness may be a humiliation, they say, but we will carry it with pride, and however sad our Jewish destiny, it must be stoically born. This attitude is comparable, though in only one way, to the spirit of Haganah resistance in Israel: *Ein Brayrah*—no other alternative. "Let's stand our ground!" cries the authentic Jew.

The things the anti-semites say about us could be true. There may be a basis for feeling inferior about our religion

and our people. On these grounds the inauthentic Jew would flee and allow himself to degenerate with his Jewish inferiority complex. Authentic Jews will stand their ground with their backs to the wall, and hold on to whatever they are. *Ein Brayrah*, no alternative: "A Jew I am and a Jew I'll be!"

On this *biological* level we have the lowest type of the authentic Jew, and, I believe, the most courageous. I say lowest form because in this point of view there is no beauty, no glory, no future in being a Jew. This point of view knows no *Judaism*; it knows only *Jews*. It accepts the anti-Jewish caricature of the Jew, but is nevertheless willing to stand by it. Seeing the worst and accepting the worst, it is the most loyal and most courageous form of authenticity.

Like Abraham, when commanded, "Take your son, your only one, and offer him up as a burnt sacrifice,"⁶ these Jews ask no questions. But these Jews, willing as they are to accept a living hell for their Jewishness, have yet to learn what Abraham learned at the *Akeda*, when he offered Isaac as a sacrifice. As Isaac lay bound hand and foot, a sacrifice ready upon the altar, at the twelfth hour, Abraham heard the Voice: "Stretch not forth thy hand against the lad, nor do him any harm."⁷ Abraham realized that God did not seek the Jew to *die* but to *live as a Jew*.

This type of authentic Jew has to learn that one can live as a Jew—can find contentment and joy, a spiritual satisfaction in Jewishness. "I shall not die," said the Psalmist, "but I shall live (as a Jew) and declare the works of the Lord."⁸

The Sociological Level

There is more to being an authentic Jew than this lowest biological level. As our authentic Jew makes his pilgrimage deeper into the Jewish experience, he discovers the Jewish folk way of life. He finds the Jewish home, with its rituals

and aromas, its dishes and menus, its ties and sentiments. He sees the cousins clubs, the *landsmanshaften*, the loan societies, the fraternities, the Y.M.H.A.'s, the *Farbanden*, the *folkstimliche* comederie—"where you can be a Jew among Jews." He meets Hadassah, Pioneer, and Mizrachi women, Zionists and B'nai B'rith men, and observes the active life of Jewish philanthropy.

All this Jewishness on the *sociological* level gives the Jew a feeling of belonging, of not being alone in the world. This is good as far as it goes. But being a Jew is not only eating bagel and lox on Sunday morning or blintzes on *Shavuot* or salami, pastrami, and "baloney" at a pinochle game. Being a Jew is even more than helping the Jewish sick, the orphaned children, the aged. To see in these laudable acts the totality of Jewishness would make it a social-service occupation and the Jewish community solely a collection of the hungry, orphaned, old, and sick.

The Cultural and Religious Levels

Hence, there must be more to authentic Jewishness than the sociological level. At the next level the authentic Jew does not fight against the world. He does not have a rowdy time dancing a *freilachs* at a wedding nor does he eat a "Kosher-style" sandwich. At this level, the authentic Jew is at home, alone or with his family, reading a chapter from the Bible or a book by Sholom Aleichem, or listening to good Jewish music. At this *cultural* level, Jewishness is not the blind, stubborn, inarticulate assertion of "I am what I am," or the complacent claim to dispensing charity. At this level, Jewishness expresses itself as refinement, culture, form, idea, and beauty.

Intertwined with cultural Jewishness is the highest level, the *religious* level. Religion has been the root and the flower

of Jewish life and the Jewish person. The religion of Judaism has interpenetrated and inter-related the whole territory of Jewishness. The Jewishness of all levels—biological, sociological, and cultural becomes interwoven at the religious level, where Judaism explains to us what man is, his place in the universe, the purpose of human existence.

An Example: Bar Mitzvah

To illustrate the various levels of Jewishness consider the Bar Mitzvah ceremony in Jewish life. On the basic biological level, the young fellow will begin to feel his Jewishness when he realizes he is a Jewish boy in his dating and social contacts. As he enters puberty, he becomes aware of the separation between Jewish and non-Jewish society. "Whom are you going out with tonight?" "Whom are you taking to the dance?" These prying parental questions teach the adolescent the Jewish facts of life.

At Bar Mitzvah, the Jewish boy experiences the sociological level of his Jewishness. Uncles, aunts, cousins, friends—all seem to join him in one strong union. A Jew can say "we" and really mean it when he is with a group of other Jews. This is the feeling of the Bar Mitzvah boy on his big day. "Today I am a Jew," he proudly announces to a "bunch" of other smiling and approving Jews. They think, "Yes, we are all Jews!" This "we" feeling saturates the Bar Mitzvah boy and the whole celebration.

Psychologically all this is good: it gives us security, a sense of belonging. But higher in the significance of this ceremony is the religious level at which boy becomes man with moral responsibilities. "Today I am a man—under God." Dig deeply into the feeling of Jewishness and you come to God. Our Jewishness really began on the religious level and always, in the last analysis, returns to that level.

Jewishness on All Levels

We Jews live as distinct people because Jews have decided most of the time to be authentic, to be what we are. But what are we? Are we Jewish only on the biological level? The sociological? Cultural?

The authentic Jew is Jewish on *every* level. On the biological level, he states simply: Because I was born a Jew and remain a Jew, therefore I am a Jew. On the sociological level: Because I live with Jews, mix and fraternize with Jews, help needy Jews, feel united with Jews, therefore I am a Jew. On the cultural-spiritual level: Because I read Jewish literature, pray to God in a Synagogue, live according to Jewish ideals at home and in the market place, therefore I am a Jew.

Realizing all these meanings in our Jewishness, we feel a personal significance in the words said to Abraham by God: ". . . because thou hast done this thing . . . I will surely bless thee, and I will multiply thy children like the stars in heaven . . . because thou hast hearkened unto my voice." ⁹

The Road to Authentic Judaism

We continue here with our general theme of "*How* should I be a Jew?" The first essay considered the weaknesses and limitations of the inauthentic Jew; the second, the strengths and vitalities of the authentic Jew. At the same time, we found that the authentic Jew may be strong in his feelings of Jewishness on the biological and social levels, but weak in his feelings on the spiritual-religious level. It is important to bolster this spiritual-religious level of our Jewishness, to achieve a better insight into our Jewishness on this level.

We can begin by considering the life of a certain man and some of his ideas. We engage in this spiritual biography because this man was concerned with the same problem that we are: How to achieve an authentic Jewishness on the religious-spiritual level. Because he was quite successful in solving this problem, we can learn much from him: he can show us the way. The great step of achieving authentic Jewishness on a religious level happened to this man on Kol Nidre night half a century ago, in Berlin. By worshipping at an Orthodox synagogue on Kol Nidre and all day of Yom Kippur, he changed the course of his life.

The Man Rosenzweig

Who was this man? What did he accomplish?

Franz Rosenzweig was born on December 25, 1886 at Kassel, Germany. His great-grandfather on his father's side had come from Eastern Europe with a rabbinical ordination, but had settled in Kassel as a manufacturer. His paternal grandfather was a chemist, his maternal grandfather the principal of a Jewish school, his father a successful industrialist and respected civic leader. The Rosenzweig family was formally

affiliated with the Jewish community, but its Jewishness was empty of all content. It was what we call a modern Jewish middle-class family.

Young Franz at first studied medicine, but in 1908, at twenty-one, he transferred to the University of Freiburg to work in modern history. In the summer of 1912, at twenty-five, Rosenzweig earned his Ph.D. degree by writing a dissertation on Hegel. He showed such great promise as a thinker that his professor invited him to join the faculty at Freiburg. As you can see, we are dealing with a modern, western, assimilated, highly educated Jew.

When his cousin Hans Ehrenberg accepted baptism and became a Protestant, Rosenzweig's family was shocked. Although themselves indifferent in matters of religious faith, they nevertheless opposed this break with ancestral religion. Franz differed with them. He was disgusted with the religionless "Jewishness" of the middle-class world in which he lived. In a letter to his parents, he defended his cousin's conversion to Christianity. Again, we note this man's broadmindedness and honesty.

During 1913, when he was twenty-six, he became concerned with religious thinking. He was attending the University of Leipzig, for courses in jurisprudence under Eugen Rosenstock, a Christian of Jewish origin, now teaching at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H. The two lunched together every day, and discussed religion. Contact with Rosenstock was a revelation to Rosenzweig. Usually, a college professor of law is not a religious man; it is unexpected and certainly unfashionable to find college graduates who are religious. Yet here was a professor, of Jewish origin, taking religion so seriously that he completely influenced the doubting Rosenzweig to the point where, in that summer of 1913, he decided to accept Christianity. But Rosenzweig made himself one reservation: he would enter into Christianity only as a

Jew, not as a pagan. This meant he must first become Jewish, religiously Jewish.

When his mother learned of his plans, she was deeply shocked and hurt. She asked him, "Were you not in synagogue on Rosh Hashanah?" Franz answered, "Yes, and I will go to synagogue on the Day of Atonement, too. I am still a Jew." His mother said, "When I come in, I will ask them to turn you away. In our synagogue there is no room for a *Meshumad* (apostate)." ¹⁰ So Rosenzweig went to Yom Kippur services in a little Orthodox "shul" in Berlin. This was actually in preparation for the church: he wanted to come to Christianity "through" Judaism.

But something happened to Rosenzweig in "shul" on that Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur—a miracle. He went in a ready convert to Christianity. He came out a believing Jew.

A Spectacular Conversion

Exactly what happened there that day nobody can ever know. We can only surmise what went on in his mind.

What brought this lost Jew back to Judaism? We can find the answer to this question in the religious experience of the day itself. On Yom Kippur, the Jew, though united with his brother Jews in prayer, stands utterly alone before God, a humble man before the Judge of all the world: *Ail Orech Din* (The Lord of Judgement).

The drama of this exalted day begins on Yom Kippur Eve. Even before he comes to "shul" for Kol Nidre, the Jew must cleanse himself of all guilt committed against his fellow men and seek their forgiveness. With the chanting of Kol Nidre, the Jew frees himself of unintentional commitments to his fellow men and no longer stands before mankind; now the Jew stands alone with his sins, before God.

All the *piyutim*, the hymns of the day, contrast the grandeur and glory of God with the weakness of man. The scriptural readings of the Torah and the Prophets contrast the

ancient sacrificial rites of atonement with man's obligations "to let the oppressed go free and to deal bread to the hungry." ¹¹ Then the liturgy of the *Musof*, the Additional Service, leads us through recollections of the ancient Temple service on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest pronounced for the one and only time during the year, the ineffable name of God. We read a moving poem about the Ten Martyrs who died for God and His Torah. At the *Mincha* service, we read the story of Jonah, the prophet who tried to flee from God and failed.

Then comes *Ne-ilah*, the hour when sunset nears and the worshipper once more cries out his desire to enter "God's gate," to be close to God. At the close of the *Ne-ilah*, the climax to the Fast Day arrives. In utmost solemnity, the whole congregation upon its feet pronounces the profession of our faith: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is Our God, the Lord is One," and then seven times, "The Lord, He is God." With this public proclamation of faith, followed by the sounding of the Shofar, the drama of the Day of Atonement comes to an end.

We can see what might have been Rosenzweig's emotions when he left the services a changed person. What he thought he could find only in the church—a faith that gives a solid foundation from which to face a world—he found that day in the synagogue. His anguished mother discovered her son had converted—to Judaism.

Fortunately for us, Rosenzweig left us a large legacy of writings to read and learn from. In these writings he explains to us the need for living as a religious person, just as he himself actually lived and practiced what he taught.

Living as an Authentic Religious Jew

The Jew, when he becomes part of the Jewish heritage, develops a basic outlook on life—a God-centered interpretation of reality. Man is not alone in this vast universe and all

that occurs there is not the result of accident or a remorseless mechanical determinism. Jews who accept authentic Judaism believe that there is a God of this vast cosmos who is Lord over everything. Under God stands man, free to choose good over evil, clothed with dignity and created only a little lower than the angels, but also filled with beastly drives and instincts for power, glory, and sensuality. As authentic Jews, we believe there is a close, personal relationship between God and man, between the Creator and the creature, between the Father and the child. The essence of this relationship is the awesome "Dialogue": God to Adam, "Where art thou?" and Adam to God, "I am here!"¹²

God speaks to man most distinctly in the form of commandments and man speaks to God most naturally in prayer. But God also answers man in prayer at the same time as man serves God in the observance of His commandments. Yom Kippur is an illustration of the great Dialogue: man stands before God humbly beseeching forgiveness; man returns to God and God to man.

Now, the great contribution of Rosenzweig as a thinker was not merely to restate these things, but actually to live by them. An American high school student once gave this definition of religion: "Religion is something you profess but which you know isn't true." Rosenzweig did not consider Judaism to be a "religion" of this kind. He believed that Judaism always finds its way back to reality, to human activity. To be religious, according to Rosenzweig, means not only to believe in certain principles or to live in a certain general way, it means to have a certain quality of existence, to live one's life in the daily course of human activity in close contact with God. This is not mechanical "religion," but a faith in God that is real and intimate.

This closeness with God can be accomplished only through a personal commitment, made as the individual in all loneliness makes his way back to God and to his Jewishness. It is

in this road back to God that Franz Rosenzweig makes his specific contribution to us and speaks to our own generation.

Religious Life as a Personal Experience

The average American Jew no longer feels himself living under the obligation of the Torah, and does not see himself standing at Sinai—*Mushba V'omaid Mai-har Sinai*,¹³—and receiving the Torah. How can you make this Jew feel that he should live Jewish law?

The Jew, said Rosenzweig, must look upon the *mitzvah*, not as *Gesetz* or law, but as *Gebot*, commandments. Mitzvos are commandments from God for *me*. Each Jew must feel as if *he* stood at Sinai and heard God's commandments personally given to *him*. Fulfilling the command to fast on Yom Kippur is not a mechanical act "because grandmother used to do it"; a Jew fasts because God tells us to fast and by fasting we obey God and become part of a *dialogue* with God.

Each Jew must personally accept this call from God, and answer by deed. If you reject this ritual of fasting, it is a dead law (*Gesetz*); if you obey the ritual, by your acceptance you bring it to life and it becomes God's living commandment (*Gebot*). When you hear that inner voice speaking to you, demanding that you fast, and you say, "I will," *law* is being transformed into *living commandment*.

Rosenzweig insisted that each of us must respond for himself to Jewish laws and make them truly God's living commandments. Rosenzweig, who started with nothing, became more and more traditional in his own observance as time went on. He insisted that the religious life is a personal experience and must be personally acquired.

What Rosenzweig Accomplished

During World War I, he was stationed on the Balkan front. In May, 1918, the Army transferred him to Warsaw,

where for the first time he came into contact with East European Jewry. He was profoundly impressed. The authentic Jewish existence of the Polish Jew threw into sharp relief the "inauthentic" existence of the western Jew. When he returned to the Balkans in 1918, he began to write his major philosophic works on army post-cards which he sent home to his mother. It still seems almost unbelievable that a three-volume work so complicated and intricate could have been composed in this manner.

In 1922, he was stricken by a creeping paralysis which gradually affected his whole body, even his speech organs. And yet, such was the indomitable spirit of this man, that the next years under complete paralysis were the most creative in his life. During this period, he collaborated with Martin Buber in translating thirteen books of the Bible into German; he wrote many essays on Jewish law and Bible, and extensive book reviews; he translated Yehuda Halevi's poetry with profound notes and explanations; and he carried on an extensive correspondence besides. In his leisure hours, Rosenzweig, who had a musical training, reviewed recordings for a newspaper and wrote a few interesting chapters on musical history.

All this he accomplished when he could move only one finger! His biographer and personal friend, Nahum Glatzer, wrote, "with the help of nurses, he was placed in an arm chair; his chin was supported by a small cushion that kept his head from dropping; his right thumb miraculously retained some power of movement, though slow and indistinct. His thumb he moved—his arm supported by a sling—over a plate containing the letters of the alphabet . . . His wife, sitting beside him, combined the letters into a word, the words into a sentence, and the sentence into elaborate articles, epistles and books." ¹⁴

This was truly a saint. For nine years until his forty-third

birthday, he lived in paralysis. Surely his courage and strength came from his faith in God. We are accustomed to think of Jewish saints with white flowing beards and black *Kappotehs* (coats). But Franz Rosenzweig was a western Jew, a broad-minded worldly man from an assimilated upper-middle-class Jewish home, with the coveted Ph.D. degree from a German university, who stood upon the very brink of Christianity. And then, fifty years ago, into a Berlin Orthodox synagogue he went to pray as his last Jewish act before turning non-Jew. Something happened—we have tried to guess what—and Franz Rosenzweig came forth a new man and a Jew who was to grow into sainthood.

We may not be made of the same stuff as Rosenzweig. But we are human, we have hearts and souls. Once we open our hearts and souls authentically to God in Jewish prayer and worship, a change will come over us too.

What Is Authentic Judaism?

The traditional-minded Jew accepts a written tradition in the Bible and an oral tradition in the two Talmuds and contemporaneous rabbinic literature. In later generations, responsa and codifications further clarified Jewish dogmas, ritual, and religious ideas. About the authority of this vast religious-legal-ethical literature there was no debate. All Jewry, until the last century, accepted this authority. Before modern times, the last great challenge to this body of religious authority occurred in the 9th century, when the Karaite sect opposed the Rabbinites on the ground that Bible, the written tradition, constituted the only authority in Judaism. But after great community conflicts and polemics, the Karaites were expelled from the Jewish Community and excommunicated from Judaism. Chassidism of the 18th and 19th centuries, though emphasizing joy and fellowship over learning and literature as a way to bring the masses of simple Jews closer to tradition and love of God, never questioned or opposed the vast literature of traditional religious guidance.

Only in comparatively recent times, with breakdown in Jewish community life, dissolution of the Jewish way of life, and doubts cast upon the Jewish view of life, has the problem of what is authentic Judaism become a serious one.

Some Trial Answers

For the Orthodox Jew who accepts classic, normative Judaism and its religious literature, the answer to the question is comparatively easy. Authentic Judaism is what has been codified in our great compendia, the laws that regulate Jewish faith and behavior. There may be great variety of opinion in interpreting this vast literature. A recent example is the support by the Mizrachi-Hapoel Hamizrachi groups of mili-

tary service for women in Israel and the opposition by the Agudah. A difference of opinion like this grows out of difference of interpretation, but what is being interpreted is accepted as binding by both parties. For the Orthodox Jew, the nature of authentic Judaism has been defined for him by Jewish history and *Halachah* (Legal Decision), and he accepts that decision.

For the non-Orthodox Jew, who does not accept the authority of the religious, ethical, philosophical and legal literature, the problem of authentic Judaism is a much more serious one.

For example, an Anglo-Jewish editor recently polled a group of representative Jews on what program or principles all Jews could accept. They could not agree either on religious principles or on a political program; they only agreed to disagree. They could not even agree that to be a Jew, an authentic Jew, means to believe in one God. This was because they could not agree on the nature of God.

The story is told of a group of Jews who lived through a harrowing experience and wanted to thank God for His kindness. Each began his prayer with a salutation typical of his own particular belief in God. The Orthodox Jew began: *Elokaninu V'elokai Avosainu*, "Our God and God of our Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." The Reform Jew began his prayer: "O Lord, Thou, Source of Inspiration, Rock of our Strength, Molder of our Destiny." The Reconstructionist Jew began his prayer: "To Whom It May Concern."

The authentic Jew might begin with the proposition that "nothing Jewish is alien to me." This approach would cover tremendous territory. It would imply for example, that *Payos* (ear-locks), and fur-tailed hats and *shaytlach* (wigs) are Jewish. Any custom or practice into which Jews have invested centuries of piety would automatically become *Jewish*, and

must therefore be retained by the authentic Jew. This principle, if we follow it consistently would lead to absurdity. It would be absurd even for the most Orthodox of American Jews today to wear *Shtreimlech* and *Kappotehs*. "Nothing Jewish is alien to me" may be a good rule for Jewish feelings and instincts, but it is not a rule by which we can actually live.

Minimal Set of Principles

Here is a set of minimal principles for authentic Jews who are not yet prepared to accept and follow maximal traditional Judaism. Unlike other declarations of minimal principles, these are designed to help the average American Jew come closer to Judaism to return to God and His Torah. They are, of course, not final, but only tentative.

God—In our mystical literature, we have this profound statement: "God, Torah and Israel are One."¹⁵ We believe in the reality of God because we see His influence in the beauty and orderliness of nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork,"¹⁶ says the psalmist. The rabbis in a deeply religious mood taught: "The non-believer even when alive is considered dead, because he sees the sun rise and does not pronounce the blessing, 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord Our God, King of the Universe, who formest light and createst darkness, who makest peace and createst all things.' He eats, drinks, and does not bless the Name. But the believers—the *Tzadikim*—bless everything they eat, drink, see, and hear."¹⁷ Do the Rabbis really mean that merely by refraining from pronouncing any blessing a man becomes a *Rosha* (wicked) and is considered dead? Rather this seems to be the true meaning: The non-believer is dead *spiritually* to the extent that he

does not sense the mystery inherent in the rising and setting of the sun, and does not feel the need to recite a blessing to God. The non-believer is spiritually dead because he looks upon a wonder of nature as a mechanical thing; he does not behold the divine interlaced in all that is about him. Elizabeth Barrett Browning expressed the spiritual death of him who does not see, in the following words:

“Earth crowned with heaven and every common bush
afire with God.

But only he who sees, takes off his shoes.”¹⁸

The God we believe in as Jews, is the Creator. “*Braishis bara Elokim Es Hashamayim V’es Ha-Aretz*”—“In the beginning God created Heaven and earth.”¹⁹ Yet our God is not a distant Being who once created a vast universe and is now indifferent to its needs. He is *Avinu*, Our Father. He is not only our God, but the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. He is the God who took our forefathers out of Egypt, who gave us our Torah. He is our Father in Heaven who is “near to those who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him sincerely.”²⁰

Torah—We also believe in Torah because we feel that God, Who is good and Who created man, would want to help man by showing him how to live. God has done this, as we believe, through the Torah.

The Orthodox believe that the *Chumash*, the Five Books of Moses, word for word, was dictated by God to Moses and these words are divine. The non-Orthodox consider the Torah “divinely inspired,” written by men under a spell of inspiration. Divine inspiration, to the non-Orthodox, is a figure of speech. Shakespeare, too, was truly inspired when he wrote his great dramas, as is any poet or philosopher, or any

writer in his moments of creativity. Does this mean we must try to live by the words of every artist in language, every teller of tales?

The Chumash, though written by Moses, is the result of a "dialogue," a meeting between God and man. When a man under the impact of God's presence sees the "burning bush" and takes off his shoes, surely this man is receiving a revelation. And when, through all Jewish history, the great spiritual leaders of Judaism saw the "Earth crowned with heaven and every common bush afire with God," surely the Torah they helped create and write, the Torah they taught and lived by is as revealed as anything can ever be revealed by God to Man.

When our God-intoxicated men, our spiritual giants, wrote down their great pronouncements under the impact of their encounter with God, they left us documents of a direct personal meeting. These documents contain eye-witness information of a revelation, of a God given truth. This is our Torah as it was studied through all generations. And those who studied and imbibed it were themselves seared and singed in their hearts and souls. For this is the power of the revealed word that comes from God.

This Torah—the term includes both our Bible and our Talmudic-rabbinic literature—is the link connecting man to God. Between man and God there are for us no saints, no sons, no mothers. As Jews, we believe there is nothing between man and God other than the Torah, the most perfect revelation of God to man, to bind man to God.

Israel—We also believe in Israel. In classic Jewish theology this concept is based on the "Election" of Israel or Israel as the "Chosen People." Reform Judaism accepts the Orthodox doctrine of the chosenness of Israel. Mordecai Kaplan rejects this view for a very naive reason: the world, he says, has too much chauvanism and we Jews ought to set a good exam-

ple of tolerance by discarding our doctrine of the "Chosen People." But this whole approach is irrelevant as well as irreverent.

Midrash tells the beautiful story of how God went from people to people asking them to accept the Ten Commandments.²¹ "What is written in your Torah?" each people asked. "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Hearing this, the peoples rejected the Torah. All except Israel. Only Israel chose the Torah. The historical fact of a Jewish decision and stubbornness to live by the Torah caused Israel Zangwill to call us not the "Chosen People" but the "Choosing People." There can be debate over whether or not we are the "Chosen People," but there can be no debate *today* as to whether we are the "Choosing People." Jews can be considered the "Chosen People" as long as we choose to live near God and by His Torah. To be considered chosen is basically a subjective feeling, a commitment, and not a theological honor.

Frederick Nietzsche made this biting comment about Christians: "Christianity claims to be the religion of the Redemption. But the Christians I see do not appear to be redeemers." We may say the same for our Jews. We are called the "Chosen People." But too many of us do not act or talk as if "chosen" because we do not *choose*. If more Jews will choose to live near God and by His Torah, we will then be a *choosing* people and hence a *chosen* people.

Our belief in Israel has another implication: *Kol Yisroel Araivim Zeh Lazeh*. "All Israel is responsible for one another."²² *Chavairim Kol Yisroel*. "All Israel are united in fellowship."²³ The unity of Israel implies a bond of attachment that each Jew feels for every other Jew, a readiness in every Jew always to help a fellow Jew. I recall when Stephen Wise, the great American Jewish leader, pronounced with great pathos his deep faith in *Achdus Yisroel*, the unity of

Israel. He said, "If a Jew is persecuted in Poland, my heart bleeds; if a Jew is hurt in Israel, my blood boils."

But we are speaking not only of unity *in* Israel. Authentic Judaism emphasizes unity among God, Torah and Israel. Israel loves God and Torah, God loves Torah and Israel, Torah loves God and Israel. To be an authentic Jew, then, means loving Israel (Ahavas Yisroel), loving the Torah of Israel (Ahavas Toras Yisroel), and loving the God of Israel (Ahavas Elokai Yisroel).

These three loves are the basis for a minimal program for authentic Jews who take their Jewishness seriously, who are willing to ponder and study as they make their way back to Judaism.

JEWISH RITUAL

The Jewish Way: Ritual and Golah

The Sanctification of Life

Glorification of God: Ritual and Piety

Uniqueness of Man: Ritual in Man's Life

The Jewish Way: Ritual and Golah

According to the Talmud, there are 613 basic Mitzvos in the Bible from which come various applications and sub-laws. Two or three generations ago, these Mitzvos and their applications governed every aspect of the life of the Jew: personal and social, secular and religious, commercial, civil, criminal. With the dissolution of the Jewish community and its way of life in modern times, the Torah began to shrink. The authority of our commercial, civil and criminal laws was shifted to the state. Our thoughts, ideas and intellectual apparatus became secularized as we shared the total tradition of Western civilization. Even the area of morals was taken over by the state and other creators of value like the philosopher, poet, psychiatrist, author, and newspaper editor. The vastness of Torah was circumscribed to what American culture calls "matters of conscience." Mitzvos became "ritual," concerned only with synagogue worship, religious festivals, dietary laws, birth, puberty, marriage, death, and burial. Ritual—only a *segment* of the Torah, only *part* of the Mitzvos, came to represent the whole of Jewish life.

Ritual and Rebelliousness

I will concentrate on ritual in these chapters in order to arouse our interest, awaken our responsibility, revive our observance of Jewish customs and thereby help rebuild the Jewish way of life. I am fully aware of the obstacles confronting this attempt to change the course of human behavior.

Most of us have become habituated to the way we live. We think it is good, comfortable and convenient, so why change? I know that my arguments—no matter how cogent and logical—will not cause any immediate change in our behavior.

There are other reasons, however, for explaining Jewish ritual. First, I wish to strengthen those of us who do practice ritual (and all of us do practice it, to a greater or lesser degree). Secondly, I hope to undermine any opposition some of us may feel, so that in years to come, we will gradually observe more and more of Jewish ritual. Thirdly, I want to demonstrate that those of us who observe Jewish ritual are not superstitious nor do we live in the past. Quite the contrary: we have very good reasons for what we do. We think the people, who do *not* observe Jewish ritual, live in the past and are reactionary.

Sixty to twenty-five years ago, either in the *shtetelach* (small towns) of Europe or in the melting-pot immigration centers of New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, it was "progressive" to drop Jewish ritual. Only "reactionaries" persisted in eating Kosher, going to Shul, or sending their children to Talmud Torah. The "progressives," who prided themselves on their "open" minds and their ability to think for themselves, sent children to Arbeiter-Ring Shulehs, where they were trained to be "free-thinkers," to eat on Yom Kippur, to laugh at religion. To some extent it took courage to break with the traditional practice, and these Jews felt proud of themselves because they had "rebelled." They enjoyed a feeling of liberation from the "shackles" of religion.

The shackles and oppression may have been the situation fifty or twenty-five years ago. But today? Every Tom, Dick, and Harry doesn't come to synagogue on Shabbos; a great percentage of young couples in our communities do not keep Kosher. Does it take courage not to be observant today? Is

one a rebel if one stays away from Shul? Does one show an "open" mind today by not wanting to pray?

Today, the real rebels and progressives, the people who resist the majority, the people of real courage, are the young couples who maintain a Kosher home. The people with open minds, who refuse to be oppressed by shackles of the past, are those who will listen to reasons for the observance of Mitzvos and will not close their minds against new ideas in new situations.

Rebelliousness is a sign of adolescence. As a person matures, he learns to accept the problems of life and tries to solve them. If a boy of twenty rebels, he is asserting his individuality. If an old man of seventy is rebellious, it is fair to say that he did not grow up. Talking to such a man, I discovered the reason he did not come to Shul on Shabbos was that he was a "progressive" and I was a "reactionary." He forgot he was living in America in 1955; he thought he was still twenty years old, living in 1905 in Russia and a Socialist, a Bundist. "Grow up," I told him. "You're behind the times." I talked to a middle-aged woman who was proud that she did not keep a Kosher home. She gave me all the arguments that used to be expounded in Germany in 1880. I had to say to her, "My dear woman, this is America 1955, not Germany 1880."

And so, what I say to you here is meant for people who live in America *now*. And yet—I will use statements made in Palestine in the first century or in Babylonia in the ninth century or in Spain in the twelfth century. You may wonder, why not use the arguments of Germany 1880 or Russia 1905? Well, the anti-ritual arguments of Germany 1880 and Russia 1905 were already known in Alexandria of the second century B.C.E., or in Palestine before the days of the Macabees in second century B.C.E., or in Rome during the first century. In fundamentals, the arguments against the preservation of

Jewish life are the same when uttered by the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria, by the assimilationist Jews of Berlin, or by the fashionable Jews of America. On the other hand, the fundamental arguments for the preservation of the Jewish way of life are the same in all these periods. Accordingly, I shall use many of the historical reasons offered in the past for the observance of Mitzvos or Jewish ritual, though I shall use them in a modern setting.

I am about to analyze our manner of life and point out the need for the Mitzvos. All I ask of you is to have a truly open mind and be truly progressive and courageous. Do not pre-judge the case either for or against ritual observance. Do not seek the easy way out. Consider, let it all sink in, talk about it honestly with your friends, then come to terms with yourself.

The Rational Approach

At the outset, let us agree that our defense of ritual observance will be a rational one. When we ask people to follow a regimen of behavior, a discipline of action, we must do it for reasons that will make sense for their own culture and experience, their own thinking and beliefs. To some extent, many of us do not observe Jewish ritual *religiously* because we no longer believe in the divine authority behind these rituals. Many of us say that they are man-made, not divine. To those who no longer accept the divine authority of the Bible and the Talmud, it becomes necessary to appeal for observance on other foundations.

Rabbis in the Talmudic period believed that many Mitzvos can not be explained in the rational manner. Taking the verse in Leviticus, "My ordinances shall ye do; and My statutes shall ye keep," they classified all the Mitzvos of the Torah under two categories—rational and supra-rational.

"The ordinances (Mishpatim), if they had not been revealed, it would have been necessary to write them; such as the prohibition of robbery, idolatry, sexual immorality, defamation of God's name, and murder." ²⁴

These are the rational laws; if not proclaimed by God, man would have had to make them himself.

"The Statutes (Chukim), whose veracity the Evil Inclination questions, such as, eating of pig, wearing of mixed garments, the Levirate law, and the red heifer. One must not question these laws." ²⁴

It is this very category, the supra-rational, the ones the rabbis felt beyond understanding, which we will seek to make meaningful and understandable. Saadya and Rambam in their great guides to the perplexed of their ages, in the ninth and twelfth centuries, tried to give reasons for these supra-rational laws. We follow the grand tradition of our sages and teachers of the past.

The Jewish Way of Life

The first reason for observing Jewish ritual is that *this is the Jewish way of life*. Students of culture point out that despite many internal differences there is a Christian way of life, a Hindu way of life, a Buddhist way of life. Religion and culture among any people are intertwined, and become warp and woof of the same fabric, with the same overall pattern though the design has many variations. So too, Jewish life, for a thousand years on the European continent, with all its different melodic improvisations sang one major theme. There were *Nusach Sfarad*, *Nusach Ashkenaz* and many *minhagim*—but basic rituals and festivals were the same.

There have been many different kinds of Jews: Litvaks, Galitzianer, Ukranians, Bessarabians; pious Chassidim, rationalistic Misnagdim, open-minded Maskilim; fervent Cha-

badnicks, stubborn Agudists, devoted Zionists, and robust, revolutionary Bundists. There are many dialects but one language; many races but one people; many minhagim but one religion.

The religion of Judaism has united the Jewish people, has given them the same holidays, the same dietary habits, the same beliefs, the same ethics, the same rules of behavior. The religion of Judaism has given the Jewish people a common origin, a common will, a common destiny. This religion, shared by all, has bound the various kinds of Jews into one, united community.

When expressed through ritual, the Jewish way of life was shared by all. Solomon B. Freehof, a Reform rabbi-scholar, in his book, *The Responsa*, comments upon this historical-sociological phenomenon, the unity of the Jewish people, and explains how the Responsa helped to achieve this unity. "A book produced in Germany could and would be read in Spain, and one produced in Turkey would be debated in Poland. Hence, it was possible for a Talmudic author to leave the Rhineland in the 13th century, and settle in Spain; and learned correspondence (Responsa) *could weave a bond of unity among all the lands of Jewish dispersion . . .* and helped them to remain united despite repeated exile and fragmentation." ²⁵ Rabbi Freehof writes as if a certain kind of literature of itself helped unite our people. But this literature rested upon the Talmud, and the Talmud rested upon the way of life of all Jews. It was not an erudite literature that united the people; a united people living a Jewish way of life gave birth to a Responsa literature that merely reflected its organic unity.

I am not now defending any particular ritual. I am not explaining why we must eat Kosher, or observe the Sabbath and Festivals, or practice ritual circumcision. I am speaking about the total effect, the total impact of Jewish life. I am

not asking you to understand why you should put on Tfilin or wear Talis and Tzitzis, or bentch Shabbos Licht; but to understand the significance and meaning of the total Jewish way of life. For Judaism at its best is more than a precept here and a precept there; Judaism is a *Derech Hachayim*, a way of life.

Each Jewish ritual is part of a whole; all rituals together make up the Jewish way of life. If you believe in the continuation of the Jewish way of life, you must also accept and observe the rituals that make up that way of life. Reject the rituals, you reject the Jewish way of life. The Jewish way of life is a totality made up of parts and segments. You can not understand the parts or segments without relating them to the whole. Do not try to understand Kashruth by itself, or putting on Tfilin by itself, or Jewish burial practices by themselves. Judaism is an organic whole—do not take it apart. We participate in *all* of the rituals, because this is the Jewish way of life.

Eric Fromm, in his *Psycho-analysis and Religion*, defines ritual thus: "A ritual is shared action expressive of common strivings rooted in common values." ²⁶

Whatever the particular ritual, eating matzos on Pesach or breaking the glass under the Chupoh—and there is a tremendous difference in significance between the Biblical commandment to eat Matzos and the national custom of breaking the glass—it is a *shared action*, all Jews doing it together. The ritual expresses *common strivings*—Shabbos expresses the need for inner peace and spirituality in life; Yizkor expresses the sanctity of the individual and inviolability of the soul. The "common values" are especially celebrated in the holidays and festivals. As Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch taught, "The catechism of the Jew is his calendar." Pesach celebrates freedom, Yom Kippur repentance, Shavous revelation, and so on.

Before going further, let us be clear that when we speak of the Jewish way of life we mean something more than mere nationalism. It is self-evident that the Jewish way of life is the bearer of the whole Biblical, Prophetic and Rabbinic heritage which seeks justice, peace and righteousness in the ways of men, and which works and prays for the Kingdom of God. To the Rabbis of all ages, the *Malchus Shaddai*, the Kingdom of the Almighty, was the goal—self-evident and taken for granted—of the Jewish way of life. But this Rabbinic heritage, though the goal of *Malchus Shaddai* was fundamental, also sought to preserve the Jewish way of life. The Rabbis believed that the Jewish way of life carries within itself all the Jewish ethical-religious values. To weaken this way of life means we are jeopardizing the ideals it carries within itself. *Not to eat Kosher, for example is to weaken the Jewish way of life, which is to weaken belief in the one God, Creator of heaven and earth.*

The rabbis believed that if the Jewish way of life is threatened in one thing, it is threatened *in everything*. And this is the first reason for observing Jewish ritual: the preservation of Jewish way of life.

Our sub-title contains the words "Ritual and Golah." The Diaspora is a condition which only emphasizes and clarifies our argument, because Jews living as a minority in a predominantly Christian culture could never survive as a separate people if they did not have their own festivals, dietary laws, and rituals from birth to death.

It is a principle of sociology that every minority copies the lifeways of the majority and gradually disappears. But we Jews survived one thousand years of history living in the heart of Christian Europe because we had a distinctive way of life, governed by obvious and apparent ritual. The Jews were convinced that their way of life was different and superior. To preserve that way of life meant living in a specific and different kind of way.

The Lesson of Jewish History

What has been said is not merely a reasoned argument: it is also the lesson of Jewish history. I shall cite two periods in Jewish history when the very existence of our people and the ideals we carried in our way of life were threatened.

The first was the period before the Maccabean Revolt. In the second century B.C.E., the Hellenistic culture flourished in Palestine. The Syrian emperor, Antiochus, sought to annex Palestine and integrate its people into his empire. From the Jewish historian's viewpoint, the author of the *Book of Maccabees*, Antiochus could integrate the Jewish people into his empire in only one way: If the Jewish way of life were destroyed, then all that this way of life carried within it would also die. "Then the king ordered all his kingdom to become one people . . . that everyone should forsake his own laws . . . to profane the Sabbath and festivals . . . to have their sons uncircumcised and to defile themselves with every kind of uncleanness and profanation so that they might forget the Torah."²⁷

Both protagonists, Jew and Syrian-Greek, realized that to integrate the Jew, to make him lose his identity, could be accomplished only by destroying the Jewish way of life, by suppressing Jewish ritual.

The second example occurred after the failure of the Bar-Kochba revolt and the fall of Massada in 135 C.E., which brought on the Hadrianic fury. Rome now sought to uproot the troublesome Jewish province in Palestine, which had defied the Roman Eagle and broken his *Pax Romana*. How could this be accomplished? As seen from Jewish sources, the Jews suffered persecutions which Rome visited upon Palestine to erase Jewish nationality. Jews were forced to desecrate the Sabbath, to stop the practice of circumcision. Rome even sought to stop the study of Torah and end all rabbinic ordination. Without rabbi-teachers, they knew, there would come

about the ultimate deterioration of the Jewish faith. And so in the second century C.E., four centuries after the Maccabees, Jews in Palestine relearned the age-old lesson that the Jewish way of life is a way of *life*, and that deserting Jewish ritual is the way of death for the Jewish people.

Everyone reading this page feels instinctively in his heart that the distinctive practices of our faith unite us as a religious community. The rituals, the Mitzvos, are the preserving force in Jewish life, welding a people spread over continents, and linking endless generations from past to present to future. The rituals are the institutional manifestations of the Jewish way of life, which in turn is the bearer of the ideals and values of Judaism. Without rituals, no Judaism; and without Judaism, no Jews.

Only in modern times, when the Jewish community was exposed to a rationalistic, "free-thinking" atmosphere, and when Jews became citizens along with their Christian neighbors, did many Jews seek to shed the ritual, to drop the distinctive laws that made for a Jewish way of life. How this came about and what forces wrought this great change in modern Jewish life is too vast a subject to detail here. The drastic transformation that came to pass has given us a Jewish life in America that does not possess its own character or have its own style, such as Jewish life once gloried in.

Styles of Jewish Life

Some say we are a young community with most of us only first and second generation Americans. What we behold, rather, is an unfinished and very confused picture. In some parts of our country, we find little Jewish communities living a European kind of Jewish life, imported from the *Shtetelach* of Hungary and Rumania. In other sections, we find American-born and educated Jews living an American

version of the full Jewish way of life. They have their own all-day schools where 40,000 Jewish children study and the language of instruction is Hebrew. Upper middle-class families in Flatbush, Brooklyn and Jamaica, Long Island send their children to these modern and expensive Jewish all-day schools. The Conservative Movement now has a chain of five Ramah Camps where the children speak only Hebrew, eat Kosher meals, worship daily, and live a Jewish life. Though these are fully American families, first or second generation, they are seeking to live a Jewish way of life.

But what of the American Judaism we behold in the less intense Jewish circles? What is their style of life?

The Sabbath is ignored because of economic need. The bread-winners come home late Friday night, too tired to recite *Kiddush* or sing *Shalom Aleichem*; the children are given a hurried supper and scamper off to bed. The Sabbath candles burn like poor, dejected little orphans on the kitchen tables, the lone flicker of Sabbath in an atmosphere of week-day activity. On Sabbath morning, children are sent off to the Junior Congregation, sometimes against their will. It really does not seem like Sabbath! But on Sunday, when Daddy is home, the whole family dresses up in their Sabbath best and Mother prepares the most important and most luscious meal of the week. Which is the real Sabbath day for these Jews? When do they eat their best, dress their best? On Saturday or Sunday? Such is *Minhag America*—American-Jewish custom—that these American-Jewish families eat festively not on the first night of Chanukah, but on December 25th. These are not insignificant points—they are basic “practice” in the Jewish way of life in America today.

With such a pattern, we cannot say we are Jews at heart, loyal to Jewish ideals and values. Unless these values are truly part of our pattern of living, they become meaningless and are forgotten.

We Must Make a Choice

If we seriously believed in Jewish values and Jewish ideals, we would seek to live the Jewish way of life, which rests on the Jewish rituals. What other choice do we have?

Choose a way we must! We do not live in a vacuum, but as human beings in a Christian culture. If we do not follow the Jewish way of life, we follow a Christian way of life. If we do not eat our most important meal on the Sabbath, we eat it on Sunday, like Christians. If we do not celebrate Chanukah, we will celebrate December 25th. If we do not *daven* in Hebrew with Yarmulka and Talis like Jews, we will worship in English without them like Unitarians. If we don't eat Kosher like Jews, we eat non-Kosher like Christians. If we don't follow the Jewish burial customs, we will follow the rites of the Masons or the Knights of Pythias.

Of course, in the back of our minds, we can say to ourselves, "I am a Jew without these rituals, or with only some of them." True, a person is a Jew as long as he believes he is. But if a person does not share in the "actions expressive of common strivings rooted in common values," he is not *actively* Jewish. He may be Jewish in his *being*—but then, I doubt the Jewishness of his being. Which person, accepting his Jewish being wholeheartedly, would not seek to share in the actions expressive of Jewish strivings rooted in Jewish values? Which person who is truly Jewish would be ashamed to wear a Talis or keep a Mezuzah on his door?

The Need for Ritual

Some people argue that they do not oppose Jewish ritual—they oppose all ritual. It is not a matter of rejecting Jewishness, they say; it is more fundamentally a matter of a scientific mind rejecting the entire ritual attitude.

A man comes to our Synagogue to *daven*. He's given a Talis to wear, but refuses: he's against ritual—all ritual. Then he goes to a Masonic meeting; he puts on the apron, gives and takes the secret signals, and wallows in ritual. There, he is not against ritual.

Dr. Eric Fromm points out that modern man is hungry for ritual, is seeking and looking for ritual. "It is not surprising . . . that the need for ritualistic practice has taken all sorts of diversified forms. Elaborate rituals in lodges, rituals in connection with patriotic reverence for the state, rituals concerned with polite behavior, and many others are expressions of this *need for shared action*. The need for ritual is undeniable and mostly underestimated." ²⁸

The need for ritual is caused by the need for shared action. We want to be part of an organization, a club, a political party, a nation. We do not want to be alone, we are afraid to be alone. We join in certain rituals because in their performance we are no longer alone but part of a larger group who participates in the same ritual. Modern man is so afraid of being alone that he joins for the sake of joining and performs the required rituals no matter how much he "objects" to ritual in principle.

The truth is, almost all men seek rituals and observe them. If a man does not want to eat *Matzos* on *Pesach* or wear a talis in *Shul*, he is not against ritual; he is against *Jewish* ritual. The person who is "against" the ritual of the *Chanukah Menorah* is often not against the ritual of the "Chanukah Bush." The man who does not want his son to wear *Tzizis* may insist that he wear a Boy Scout uniform. I will never forget one father I knew, who didn't want his son to put on *Tfilin* but who himself went every Wednesday night to the Methodist Church where, as a Scoutmaster, he appeared in shorts and neckerchief like a good scout. He observed the ritual of another group which gave him satisfaction, but did

not care to identify himself with Jewish ritual, the Jewish way of life, Jewish values and ideals.

If people feel uncomfortable performing Jewish ritual, it may be that they are new to it and it is a little strange. But if this hatred persists, if a Jewish person chafes under the "yoke" of Jewish ritual, and fights it and resents it, opposes it and ignores it, he is not merely against ritual; he opposes the *Jewishness* of that ritual. He objects to the sharing of *Jewish* ritual, expressive of Jewish strivings and rooted in Jewish values.

Modern man needs ritual to give him security and a group feeling to identify with. Jews need Jewish ritual, because without it there can be no Jewish life. All authentic Jews, who honestly and unequivocally accept their Jewishness, will live happily with the ritual that preserves Jewish hopes and values.

The Sanctification of Life

In presenting the first reason for the observance of Jewish ritual, we took a rational approach: observe Jewish ritual because this is the Jewish way of life, the bearer of Jewish values and ideals, and in the words of Dr. Eric Fromm, a shared action expressive of common strivings rooted in common values.

But what are these strivings and values?

Kedushah—Holiness

The highest and most important value in the Jewish religion is Kedushah, holiness. This, as understood in the Bible and Rabbinic literature, is a value which is all inclusive: God is holy!

The most glorious vision in prophetic literature is described in Isaiah, Chapter Six. He beholds an assembly of angels, gathered to give honor and glory to God. The light and wonder is breathtaking as Isaiah sees this glorious scene. The angels themselves are overcome by the majestic presence of God himself and they sing: "Holy, Holy, Holy, the whole world is filled with His glory." This refrain is part of our Shacharis (Morning Service) and also part of the repetition of the Kedushah in the Amidah, when the whole congregation sings, as the angels do, "Holy, Holy, Holy, the whole world is filled with His glory." Rudolph Otto, a German theologian, in the *Idea of the Holy*, explains that this idea is the loftiest in all religion, as it elevates God to majesty, power, purity, and glory. Isaiah is the prophet who especially emphasized God as the God of Holiness, calling Him *Kadosh Yisroel*, "The Holy one of Israel." But the idea and quality of holiness is not merely a theological concept—an idea about

God. In Judaism, *Kedushah* or holiness is also a social-ethical idea. As such it is the motive force in Judaism.

In Leviticus, we read "Holy shall ye be, for I the Lord your God am holy."²⁹ *We* should be holy because *God* is holy. The Bible tells us after many commandments to obey them because "I am the Lord your God Who sanctifies you." Man becomes holy by observing the holy commandments of the holy God. Before many a religious act, which brings the spark of holiness into our life, we thank God for this particular act because "He has sanctified us with His commandments." The ideal of the Jewish way of life is "sanctification" of life. Upon lighting the Sabbath candles, the housewife recites: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Our God, King of the universe, Who has *sanctified us with His commandments*, and commanded us to kindle the Sabbath candles." Upon putting on the *Talis*, the male worshipper recites: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Our God, King of the universe, Who has *sanctified us with His commandments*, and commanded us to envelope ourselves in the *Tzitzis*."

The important words are "Who has sanctified us with His commandments." By performing a religious act, a Jewish ritual, one becomes sanctified. It is the belief in Judaism that when a man prays, especially in *Talis* and *Tfilin*, he becomes sanctified. When a woman blesses the candles before every Sabbath and holy day, she becomes sanctified. When a family puts a Mezuzah on the door, it becomes sanctified. When a household eats Kosher, it becomes sanctified. I may add parenthetically that it does not also necessarily become healthy. If you eat a balanced diet of non-Kosher food, rich in vitamins and proteins, you may stay healthy—but you will not become sanctified.

We can all see that Judaism seeks to sanctify the life we live. But what does "sanctification of life" mean? When we say God is holy, we do not have to explain our terms. We

don't know what God is and we don't know what holy is; since both are unknown, we can safely equate them. But to say that *life* can be made holy requires an explanation in terms of our own actual lives and the kind of life we live. Whatever it may mean as an attribute of God, what does holiness mean in the life we live? If holiness is a social ideal, it must be understood and explained in social terms.

The Subjective Approach to Holiness

Some people explain holiness as a social ideal, as the sanctification of life, in subjective terms. For example, let us examine the sanctification of life in two homes on a Friday night. In one home, the family—parents and two children—eat a regular dinner meal, in no way different from any other night, in no way eventful. After the meal, father and son go into the living room to read the newspaper and watch TV. After washing the dishes, mother and daughter rejoin father and son in the living room. Mother and father smile at each other contentedly as the whole family, together, in peace, listens to a hi-fi Beethoven concert. This is not a low-brow family, where father drinks whiskey and plays pinochle, the children read love-comic-books, and mother watches the fights on TV. This is a nice, respectable, “middle-brow” family, living an apparently ideal life, only without . . . well, let us see.

In the other home, parents and children of the same ages, in the same income bracket, with the same style of furniture and interior decorating, also sit around a Friday night table. Here we notice silver *Shabbos* candle sticks in the center of the table, and in front of the father, two *Challos*, a wine goblet and a wine bottle. First the whole family sings *Shalom Aleichem*, then father and son recite the *Kiddush*, all recite *Hamotzi*, eat a kosher meal, sing Hebrew songs and

Zmiros, recite in song the Grace after Meals. Mother and daughter then hurriedly stack the dishes on the sink, and the whole family goes off to services in the synagogue.

Now, those who explain "sanctification of life" in subjective terms will say, "See the difference! The first family ate without a *Brachah*; sat before television, had no *Shabbos*, no *licht-bentchen*, no shul, nothing. But the second family! Candles on the table, *Challos*, *Zmiros*, "*bentched*" after the meal, then to *Shul*. *That's a real Jewish family!*"

But if you don't feel like this, if you don't see the difference, if you believe the first family has just as good a life as the second family, you can't be convinced by the subjective method. A great percentage of a congregation, I believe, would argue that the first family is just as refined, cultured, and moral as the second. You know the argument: "You don't have to *bentch licht*, eat Kosher, sing *Zmiros*, recite the *Kiddush*, and go to services on the Sabbath to be a good person. All the people in the congregation, who are like the first family, aren't they good people? In fact, they even believe in God! So what if they don't observe Jewish Sabbath ritual?"

The subjective way of explaining "sanctification of life" is excellent when two people who both observe get together, and they gang up on a third who doesn't. They pounce upon him and say, "What do you mean, you don't see a difference? You're a *goy* if you don't!" But as between one who observes and one who does not, we need another method of explaining the benefits of sanctifying life. Let us try the methods of the social sciences.

The Historical Approach to Holiness

In Biblical times, the Prophets denounced paganism and called it despicable, *Sheketz*. When pagans worshipped and

prayed, they also indulged in disgusting sexual orgies which offended prophetic sensibilities, and also the average Hebrew. What the Prophets denounced as despicable above all was the heart of paganism, its idolatry.

What is idolatry? Worshipping a statue and calling it God? That answer is good enough for a Sunday school child, perhaps. But do you really believe that grown-up, intelligent people, like the Greeks, could worship a statue and believe it was God? Rav Abraham Isaac Kook understood the true appeal and psychology of idolatry in all its depth. The idolatrous worshipper, he explained, realized that the powers who made the world and gave him life are all spiritual, non-physical. His animism, the attributing of living qualities to objects, was based on "spiritualism," and his idolatry in turn was based upon a spiritual animism. Idolaters didn't say their idol was God. With their limited primitive minds—or, more correctly, limited human minds—idolaters sought to bring the invisible God down to earth and make him visible, accessible to the senses of men. Idolatrous worship, according to Rav Kook, lowered the divine, limited the infinite, and tried to encompass God within sensual boundaries.³⁰ *Idolatry created God in the image of men.* Idolatry believed not in elevating man closer to God, but in lowering God to the level of man.

This theological and ethical degradation of the divine was what disgusted the Prophets and made paganism despicable in their eyes. The Prophets believed that God is unseen, without shape and form, and that man is created in His image. The prophets expounded the ideal of *Kedushah*, holiness, of raising men toward God. Man must go up, must ascend, must imitate God. Holy shall ye be, they urged, because the Lord God is Holy. Idolatry limited God to a human or animal or vegetable shape, or to a mode of action by these things. Prophecy and the Bible, seeking God in all His in-

finite grandeur, stressed man's will and freedom to imitate God—to go upward, is to be holy: *Ma-alin Ba-Ko-desh; V'lo Mo-ree-din*,³¹ one goes up in holiness but not down. If God is holy, He does not become like us; when we are holy, we become like Him.

Rav Kook also points out that Christianity, a midpoint between Judaism and idolatry, also sought to picture God in the image of *a man*. True, not the image of a lustful, jealous man, as the Greeks pictured their gods; the Christian deity is an ideal man who suffered for humanity. But, let us remember, *a man* nevertheless. Their God manifests Himself to them in human shape and character.

Judaism teaches holiness, the ideal of man going ever upward. The sanctification of life, for us, means raising life to higher levels, closer to the highest, the holiest level.

Life at Its Highest

Now, relate this social concept of holiness—*raising life to its highest level*—to our own way of life. Let us see what holiness can mean to the two families we described, or to any American family. Assume you are a merchant, working in your own liquor store, grocery-meat market, shoe store, or clothing store. You get up in the morning at the appointed hour and go to work. You enjoy your work, and earn \$6000—\$10,000 a year doing it. Sometimes the work seems drab, the same old thing every day; but then what else are you going to do? It's a living! Switch from a liquor store to a grocery store or to a clothing store, and what difference does it make? You're still buying and selling.

You eat lunch in the same drugstore or lunchroom, with the same fellows every day, at the same time. You hear the same jokes from the same guys, the same gripes, the same comments. Chayim tells you the 'sexy' stories, Joe tells you

about the big deals the other fellows are pulling off, Bernard tells you how, thank God, everything is all right, and Mendel reports on the race track.

After lunch, back to the old grind. The customers are irritating today. They tell you about the sales at Euphoria Supermarket or the Merchandise Mart. In the meantime, they don't pay cash—cash they bring to Euphoria's, to you they come for credit. Can't complain . . . It's a living!

You come home at night. Wednesday night, it's pot roast; Monday night, meat loaf; Tuesday night, steak; Thursday night, fish fry. Everything in life has become routine. Eating, sleeping, working, playing, lovemaking—it all settles down to a punch-the-clock habit.

Now, you can say: "What do you expect? This is life. Doing your duty, doing the job at the right time and in the right place—that's being a good soldier. Why should you expect more?" Is this living your life at its highest—at its best—at its holiest? Expecting *more* is precisely the nature of holiness. Is it sufficient to live "like an ant in an ant hill"? Or are you a free human being who seeks individuality, who wants to be himself and think for himself, who wants to live on a level befitting a human being?

There are, of course, people who recognize the evil of the mechanization and routinization of life. What do they do? Every Monday they go out with the boys bowling, or every Sunday they take the family to Atlantic City. Even their pleasures become routine, mechanized. Their so-called recreation does not re-create them, but merely gives them other ways to remain as they are.

A woman came to me for a heart-to-heart talk one day, and told me the following story: "I am married about fifteen years, have two good children, a kind husband, nice home, fine friends. Everything seems just right. Yet I feel deep down that I am not living at its fullest. Do I need religion?"

I explained to her that I believed she needed religion—but not in the shallow sense. She needed it in the deep sense that Rav Kook understands it. “You need holiness,” I told her. “You need to live life at its highest. Now you live life at the material level, at the gadget and routine level.” “What do you mean,” she asked me, “at the gadget level?”

“When you were married,” I explained, “it was all a new experience and held your interest. Your husband had a good job, gave you a good home. Cooking was something new, housekeeping was new, then the children were new. You began to save some money. Everything was pleasant. You sold the old Chevy and got yourself a new Buick, moved into a new house. At each step, you somehow felt the next step would bring you something different, some kind of pleasure that was unlike the previous pleasure, something better. But the kind of satisfaction you obtained with each new material acquisition did not change the *content* of your life. The ingredients are about the same: old home, new home; old Chevy, new Buick. Are you living life at its highest, its holiest? You need more holiness in your life!”

Now, a different story, of a man also married about fifteen years, a father of children. His family still rented an apartment, and drove around in an old Plymouth. “No complaints against the wife,” he told me. “The kids are average. I am content with my marriage. The job is . . . a job. I am not a big dealer. We don’t run around with the fashionable crowd. We live within our means, and I don’t expect to be rich.” Then he paused, and asked, “What should I expect from life?”

To this man I said: “You are content with what you have. This attitude gives you peace. But now you are asking a fundamental religious question: what to expect from life. You seem to be getting the normal satisfactions: wife, children, job, health, and friends. But to pull this all together and put

your whole life on a higher level, to give it all a sense of dedication and higher meaning, you need to *sanctify your life*, to give it holiness, to seek to live every way on higher, uplifting spiritual levels. 'Man does not live by bread alone.' ³² Men must be *dedicated*, devoted to serving a higher cause than themselves, must give themselves completely to higher, holier living. This sense of holiness, added to the regular, normal satisfactions you already enjoy, will give you new zest, new energy, new meaning."

Holiness in Modern Living

Life on the holy level is outwardly no different from the average healthy level. To live a holy life, from the standpoint of Judaism, does not mean that one must run off to a monastery and live in fasting and prayer. According to our religion, one lives in the midst of the stream of life but raises it to a higher level. One dedicates everything one does to a higher cause.

What I have been saying about holiness applies to sensible couples and right-living families. Both the wife and the husband I mentioned realized something was missing in their lives and sought to find it. But what of those families who are constantly "on the go," slaves to the false values of our society? What of the sixty-five-year old man who really ought to retire but still goes to his business seven days a week? What of the forty-five year old husband who puts a fifteen hour day into his business and not even fifteen minutes a week into his mind and soul? These men are so bent and warped in their slavery that they have smothered the spiritual and emotional needs within them.

The Bible tells us that when Moses went to the enslaved children of Israel and talked to them about freedom and an end to all their degradation, "And they did not hearken

unto Moses because of limited spirit and hard labor,"³³ Moses talked to them about freedom, but they could not understand. Talk to a sick or neurotic person about health when he is preoccupied with sickness, maybe even enjoys all the attention the sickness gives him. Talk to the people about holiness, Shabbos, Kashrus, when their hearts and souls seek the "flesh pots of Egypt."

Our modern age, as much as the ancient world whose great curse was slavery, needs the liberating, sanctifying, influence of the Sabbath, holy days, and holy rituals. Our ulcerated, high-blood-pressure, anxiety-ridden society needs more than ever the healing balm, emotionally-relaxing, spiritually-sanctifying influence of the Sabbath. Our people need more than ever a day of physical rest and spiritual uplift to get away from the tough competitive atmosphere that marks our economic life. Our business people and professionals need a Walden Pond more than Thoreau ever did, to escape the telephone, the crowded schedule, the unending complaints and "headaches."

Modern Jews need an Erev Shabbos, a Friday night, to leave the "rat race," to detach themselves from their craving for power and possessions, from their anger and hatred, from their chase after fame, wealth, social position. Jews need a Friday night or Shabbos to become free: free to think, free to pray, free to read, free to be holy.

Holiness and Ritual

"These are the convocations of the Lord that ye should call at the appointed seasons."³⁴

Every holiday, Pesach, Shavuot, or Sukkos, is a season set aside by the Jewish faith for people to leave their daily pursuits and assemble for holy, uplifting pursuits. The pilgrim-

age to Jerusalem was called *Oleh Regel*, "going up by foot," and the convocation at Jerusalem was an *Aliyah*, a going up in the spiritual sense. Every Sabbath and every holiday is an *Aliyah*, a going up, a form of *Kedushah*. Putting on *Talis* and *Tfilin* every weekday morning expresses the same quest for holiness and sanctification. Let us quote from the meditation, which is uttered before donning the *Tfilin*: "I am now intent upon the act of putting on the *Tfilin*, in fulfillment of the command of my Creator, who hath commanded us to lay the *Tfilin*, as it is written in the Torah, And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. He hath commanded us to lay the *Tfilin* upon the hand as a memorial of His outstretched arm; opposite the heart, to indicate the duty of subjecting the longings and designs of our heart to His service, blessed be He; and upon the head over against the brain, thereby teaching that the mind, whose seat is in the brain, together with all the senses and faculties, is to be subjected to His service, blessed be He. May the effect of the precept thus observed be to extend to me long life with sacred influences and holy thoughts, free from every approach, even in imagination, to sin and iniquity. May the evil inclination not mislead or entice us, but may we be led to serve the Lord as it is in our hearts to do. Amen." ³⁵

And after putting on the *Talis*: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast hallowed us by Thy commandments, and hast commanded us to enwrap ourselves in the fringed garment. How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge under the shadow of Thy wings. They sate themselves with the abundance of Thy house; and Thou givest them to drink of the stream of Thy delights. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light do we see light. O continue Thy lovingkindness

unto them that know Thee, and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart.”³⁶

Holiness is close to the heart of Judaism. Holiness is an ideal for our times. We must sanctify our routinized, mechanized, tension-filled lives.

Glorification of God: Ritual and Piety

One reason for participating in Jewish ritual and observing the Mitzvos, we have said, is the sanctification of life. The observance in itself, in its own performance, inspires uplifting thoughts. The Sabbath, when observed in the Jewish home, transforms our living to a higher plane. The act of worship, accompanied by sincere contemplation, is in itself an uplifting experience. The Mitzvah has within itself its own quality, carries within itself its own holy medicine, and by participating in it with *Kavanah*, with sincerity of intention, one is lifted upward. As one rabbi of the second century put it, "The reward of the Mitzvah is the Mitzvah itself."³⁷

We may say that we observe the ritual for its own sake, for its own immediate effect. In the sociology of religion, this kind of motive is called an *autonomous* reason.

The other reason we have discussed for participating in Jewish ritual is to preserve the Jewish way of life. This too is an autonomous reason. By participating in a ritual you live the Jewish way of life, rather than merely talk about it. *The act by itself fulfills its own goal, is an end in itself.*

Now we suggest a third reason for participating in and living with Jewish ritual—a *theonomous* reason. The ritual is to be performed not merely for its own sake, but as a means to an end outside itself. *It is to be performed for the glory of God.*

For the Glory of God

When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they sang unto God a song of joy: "This is my God and I will glorify Him."³⁸ Rabbi Ishmael, one of the foremost Tannaim of the second century in Palestine remarked, "Can a human being *attempt* to glorify his Maker?" A passage in the Sabbath morning prayer reads: "To Thee alone we give thanks.

Were our mouths full of song as the sea, and our tongues of exultation as the multitude of its waves, and our lips of praise as the wide-extended skies; were our eyes shining with light like the sun and the moon, and our hands were spread forth like the eagles of the air, and our feet were swift as the wild deer, we should still be unable to thank Thee and to bless Thy Name, O Lord our God and God of our fathers . . .”³⁹

Indeed, how can puny man offer praise and glory to God? And we may add, does the Creator of the universe require glory and recognition from the creature? Rabbi Ishmael therefore concludes that the verse, “This is my God and I will glorify Him,” really suggests that we use especially beautiful objects in the performance of God’s commandments. “I will make a beautiful *lulav*, I will make a beautiful *sukkah*, I will make beautiful Tzitzis for my Talis, I will make beautiful Tfilin.”⁴⁰ Rabbi Ishmael is not teaching a point far removed from the text itself. He is expounding a meaning implied in the text. “I will glorify my God” by making beautiful objects or by observing beautiful rituals.

This is our third reason for living with ritual: for the glory of God. Whenever we do a specific unusual act, requiring additional effort, we can think of that act as being dedicated to the glory of God. In a passage in the Midrash, which can be attributed to the first century in Palestine, we learn: “Let not a man say, I do not like the flesh of the swine. On the contrary, he should say, I like it, but what shall I do, seeing that the Torah has forbidden it to me?”⁴¹ The rabbinic view in this passage is obviously *theonomous*. Eat Kosher because God through the Torah commands it. Notice: a man should not say he does not eat pig because it is unhealthy, or because he cannot stand the smell of it. “I like it. It is good. It is healthy. But what shall I do, seeing that the Torah has forbidden it to me?” A Jew’s attitude in participating in Jewish ritual should be, this is what I do for God.

The theonomous reason satisfies the believer: he accepts without question that crucial statement in the Bible, "and the Lord said unto Moses." But the modern person will retort: "I do not accept the authority of the Torah. How do you know what God wants?" The modern, non-orthodox Jew who does not believe, why should he perform a ritual?

Without getting involved in the theological question of Revelation, the reason for ritual performance can be the same for the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox. Both can participate in the ritual for the glory of God. The difference is this: the Orthodox believes he is fulfilling a specific request by God, which he is performing for God's glory; the non-Orthodox feels that he is doing a specific act, *hallowed by Jewish tradition*, which he is performing for God's glory. It is not important in our context whether or not this act is exactly what God wants. A more important question is, how can a Jew unmistakably express his religious feeling of "This is my God and I will glorify Him?" As a Jew, the only religious way to do this is in the performance of Jewish ritual.

The central feature of any act performed for the glory of God is altruism—performing the act not for personal profit or selfish motive, but to show devotion to God. An act of piety expresses first a faith in God and love of God. "This is my God and I will glorify Him" is a deeply imbedded religious feeling, the very heart of religious devotion. When a person performs a ritual in this mood, his act becomes a form of direct communion with God. The ritual is the gesture, the movement, the drama so to speak, through which the pious person expresses himself to God. It is a symbolic language filled with many meanings, overlaid with many interpretations, built into the ritual acts and the words by Jewish memories and Jewish tradition.

Whereas the other reasons for observing ritual are social in nature, the religious theonomous reason is highly per-

sonal. The individual seeks a discipline through which *he personally* can commune with God. No doubt these rituals become standardized and are social in their externals. But the person who performs the ritual satisfies a secret, private feeling, a personal need for a life with God. Lighting the candles on Shabbos, keeping a kosher home, praying in shul on the Sabbath, conducting the Seder at home—all these are channels of divine communion. They are like a ladder to heaven, helping the observant to live closer to God.

Belief vs. Practice

What has been said thus far appears reasonable and plausible to the average American Jew; yet the American Jew does *not* piously observe ritual. The Associated Press, in a study of religions in America, discovered that 97% or more of the Jews believed in God but only about 12% worshipped regularly. It appears that to a tremendous number of our people the belief in God does not imply any kind of obligation or responsibility, and need not make any real difference in their lives. Yet when people genuinely believe in something, they give of themselves to that particular belief. How can you “believe” in a cause, without actually serving that cause by real action, real sacrifice?

Moses Hess, in his great book on Religious Zionism, *Rome and Jerusalem*, tells a remarkable anecdote about Goethe. When the young Goethe was eighteen, his friends found him burning his books and papers in his yard. Asked to explain, he told them that he had been thinking about God and all that God had done for him, his life, his being, his whole existence. He was overcome with the desire to show his appreciation, to prove that he was ready to do something for God. This must be no little action, but a deed that would

do justice to his overwhelming feeling for God. He decided to bring a sacrifice. But what? He could not bring an ox on an altar. He burnt his books that were so dear to him and thereby brought a sacrifice to God worthy of his feelings for God.

Do our people show similar concern about doing something for God, about making a sacrifice for God?

The wide margin between those who say they believe in God and those willing to express that belief in worship and religious living is explained by the divided loyalties that people maintain. The average person has two religions, one formal, the other informal. To his formal religion he gives public and social allegiance—like attending services on Yom Kippur, or admitting he is a Jew to a census-taker. He feels some sense of commitment to what is socially recognized as a religion with a long history. This is what he calls “Judaism.”

The informal religion of a person involves his basic ideas about life, his actual beliefs, the thoughts by which he actually lives, the fundamental ideas with which he actually operates day by day. This religion is called informal because it needs no church or clergy. It consists of almost unconscious ideas that come out whenever you scratch a little below the surface. “I am a good man at heart.” “I am as honest as the next fellow.” “I lead a quiet, clean, honest life.” “I am a little fellow. What do I count? But I do all I can.” “In this day and age every man for himself.” “If you don’t have it, you’re nobody.” “It doesn’t matter *how* you made it, it all depends on *how much* you have.” “If you know the right people you’re in.”

These are expressed views on ethical relationships and the good life, but this kind of person doesn’t feel the need to relate his formal religious ideas to his daily life. What happens when he puts his informal religious views to a test, and

subjects them to the norms developed by the formal religions?

"I am a good man at heart." What is "good"? Does it mean you don't cheat in business or personal relationships? Or is it a negative definition, another way of saying, "I don't do bad things." But what does "at heart" mean? Does someone who puts over a dishonest deal ever consider himself a bad fellow *at heart*? Down deep he always feels he is really good, only he can't help himself, or the other fellow, the victim, deserves it, or everyone else does it too, and so on. Accepting this approach, who *is* bad at heart? Down deep, at heart, everybody is good. If a person disobeys any of the Ten Commandments, it is because circumstances make him, or he is mentally sick. But down deep he is like all men, really good.

Every one of us should subject his informal religious views to this searching question put to us by Moses and Micah: "What doth the Lord require of thee?" ⁴² The average person moves in different compartments. His business life has its own standards and ethics; his responsibilities to philanthropy and social service have their own special norms; an occasional visit to worship, and a vague deference to Jewish ritual, make up the particular compartment he calls his religion. You get the impression that religion is good in its place, like aspirin in the medicine chest, to be taken out for a special need and then, having served its purpose, to be returned to the chest for safekeeping.

In pre-marital interviews, when bride, groom, and rabbi meet to settle arrangements for the ceremony, I take the opportunity to explain certain Jewish ideas about family life. We discuss the wedding rehearsal, the order of procession, the positions of the participants on the Bimah, but I also point out the significance of the canopy in the Biblical law of marriage, the later Rabbinic law of marriage, also the

position of the woman in the marriage relationship according to Biblical and Rabbinic law, duties of the wife and mother in the household, duties of the father, the place of children in married life, and so on. Marriage is surely a vital step in life, and surely our religion with its wealth of experience and tradition can offer sound guidance to young couples. Yet, many a time I detect in the young couples who sit and listen respectfully a strong impatience. The rabbi, they tell themselves, has a special function to perform; his department is "religion." But marriage, family life, children, education—these are other departments. They have nothing to do with God or religion. "Why doesn't the rabbi stick to religion?" they mutter as they leave. "Why does he wander off into areas that don't concern him?"

This is a compartmentalization of life, which comes from divided loyalties. The young couple will use formal religion to sanctify their marriage, but then proceed to use informal religion in their married life. As the average young couple sees it, belief in God has very little to do with married life. They do not see how a belief in God implies certain basic attitudes toward marriage, one's mate, one's children, and the whole purpose of their life together.

This habit of relegating the rabbi and religion to a special department of life is indicative of what happens to ritual. As life becomes more and more divorced from a belief in God—a process called secularization—the rituals of life, which express belief in God and proclaim His glory, are also relegated to the background. With God, or the belief in Him, removed from life, then the rituals which express faith in Him and loyalty to Him are also removed.

Hence we can understand why people "believe" in God, yet relegate Him to a department, so that the rest of their lives proceeds without recognizing Him.

Intellectual, Emotional, and Volitional Responses

Belief in God implies three kinds of human responses: intellectual, emotional, and volitional. All three together make up religion.

To some, belief in God is an intellectual experience. A person thinks through his reasons why he believes in God. His explanations and reasons help to dispel the veil of mystery, the darkness, that hovers over man and his universe. Proofs and theories make man feel at home in what seems to be an impersonal universe. Man needs an explanation for the existence of the universe and for his own being. What is the meaning of the whole universe? Is all this, the universe and man, a vast horror, ground out by mere chance with no more significance than a "tale told by an idiot," or is it the outward manifestation of the creative, all-powerful spirit? No religion is worth its salt that has no food for the intellectual hunger of men. That is why great religion has produced great minds like Job, Philo, and Rambam. Philosophy as well has contributed greatly to this phase of religion, which to many intellectuals is the most important phase.

But if religion were limited to this response, many people would be excluded. Religion is not for philosophers only, but for all people. For most of us, such a religion is cold and anti-social. On the other hand, some have held that religion is essentially a matter of the emotions, of feeling, a state of the soul and heart which leaves thought behind. Mystics who love God with a love passing understanding show that religion can be a deep emotional experience. Were belief in God *only* an emotional experience, however, it could lead to irrational extremes. Some mystics, in their absolute concentration upon the emotional aspect in their belief in God, indulge in ascetic behavior which is almost abnormal. These

emotional outbursts can even be non-moral, for to concentrate exclusively upon the love of God can bring us to forget the love of man.

Finally, some have held that religion, or the belief in God, is nothing else but moral action, entirely volitional: belief in God means belief in ethical conduct and goodness. The modern movements of "humanism," which make a religion of humanity, fit into this category. If religion were only good ethics, however, it would also be incomplete. Ethics alone can not turn a sinner into a saint; ethics alone cannot generate an internal transformation. The Greek view that merely *knowing* the good will make a man *do* good, we have learned in our time, is not correct. Something deeper than knowledge is necessary. Our century has learned by bitter experience of the Nazi-Communist dictatorships that ethical fruits shrivel and die unless they are nourished by religious roots.

Accordingly, all three responses to God make up a full religion. The intellectual element contributes thought and meaning; the emotional element, warmth and feeling; the ethical-volitional element, social justice and group living.

It is the glory of the Jewish religion that in it we find a unique blending of all three responses to God: intellect, emotions, will. These human responses to God are all subsumed in the command, "Thou shall love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart."⁴³

In Biblical psychology the heart is the repository of the intellect. "With all thy heart," means with the intellect. "With all thy soul" means with the emotions. "With all thy might" means with the will. Love of God is not only intellectual intoxication, nor only a pious reverie, nor only social service. Love of God is a love in which *all* powers of common life come into play and enter into full action.

"The world stands upon three things: Torah, worship (prayer), and practice of good deeds."⁴⁴ Torah gives expres-

sion to the intellect; *Avodah*, to the emotions; and *Gemilus Chassadim*, to the will.

“This is my Lord and I shall glorify Him.” I shall glorify Him with my intellect, with understanding and knowledge. I shall glorify Him with my emotions and feelings, in loving Him with worship and ritual. I shall glorify Him with my will to do good, to love and serve my fellow man.

Uniqueness of Man—Ritual in Man's Life

The claim of every person to the Four Freedoms proclaimed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and to the pledges of the Bill of Rights, flows from the basic ethical concept of the inviolability of the individual. The ethical principle of the dignity of man implies that each human being is sacred. Each person is entitled to be himself and to develop his abilities in accordance with his own instincts and style of life.

The idea that personality is holy and inviolable is, however, challenged by the needs and claims of industrial-urban society.

Depersonalization

A Spanish social thinker, Ortega Y. Gasset, points out in his book *The Revolt of the Masses* that the individual person is on the decline, and in his place there has arisen a new man—the mass-man, *massen-mench*. The psychology of this new type of man is to think of himself not as an individual person, but as a member of a crowd. The individual person submerges himself to become part of a large mass. The growth of large cities, huge corporations, vast factories and big department stores, the regimentation of people into disciplined robots, serving the production or distribution machine, have forced the individual person into a faceless anonymity wherein he becomes one of a mob.

The vast propaganda scenes showing a Lenin, or a Hitler, or a Mussolini talking to a multitude of people, all with the same docile expression on their faces, depict modern man—a person who does not count except to make a crowd.

As social and economic conditions gnaw away more and more of our individual freedom, people as a group form a "Lonely Crowd," the title of a sociological study by David Reisman. Each person in the crowd is lonely; all are together,

but since there is no individuality, each one is alone. To a great extent, modern life encourages this depersonalizing of the individual.

In our day we do not look upon a person as individual, but as a mere cog in the industrial machine, for whose feelings we need show no consideration. We reduce the person, with his soul and his feelings, to a statistic, a number in production or consumption charts; no one is much concerned with the feelings of cogs or the emotions of pistons. Such is the degradation and devaluation of the individual in our day.

The development of society in western civilization has reduced the person to an anonymous non-entity. Psychologist Rollo May in his book *Man's Search for Himself*, makes it clear that the individual person is ceasing to be himself. Rollo May receives patients who are indifferent to their own welfare, who believe that they will find security by being "nobody." He cites Franz Kafka's novel, *Trial*, wherein the hero, accused of a crime punishable by death, does not fight back or protest that he is innocent, but remains passive throughout. The accused feels safer in his anonymity than in proving himself innocent and showing himself to be a person. Rollo May calls such mass-men "hollow people."

In 1954 New York City's Museum of Modern Art held an exhibition of a surrealist painter, Giorgio de Chirico. *The New York Times Magazine*, in a story on this exhibition, wrote this about surrealist painting and the surreal world: "Surrealist painting at its most serious and best takes us to places that never quite exist in the actual world but lurk just across its boundaries in a dream-like realm." The painter, de Chirico put on canvas the feelings of anonymity we are describing, feelings that nowadays lurk just across the boundaries of human consciousness.

In one revealing painting published in the magazine, we see a faceless head perched on the representation of a human

figure, gazing upon an easel which seems to be leaning on space. The whole painting is a mixture of reality and fantasy. The caption below the picture reads: "Ultimate loneliness of the kind that cannot be helped and is the common lot, seems to be the subject matter of 'Seer' painted by Georgio de Chirico in 1915. The almost real figure and the very real objects exist in a kind of ominous space."

This great surrealist painter looked below the surface of our social facade, and already in 1915 beheld what Kafka wrote about, and what our psychologists and psychiatrists are discovering today in the private sanctums of their offices—that man is lonely, that the individual is losing his individuality, the person is losing his personality, that mass-man now is more like a mannequin than a man.

What has been observed by psychologist Rollo May and sociologist David Reisman is also seen by the political and natural scientist, Bertrand Russell. He discusses this problem of the depersonalization of modern man from the political viewpoint in his book *The Impact of Science on Society*. His thesis is that science through technology has so changed our society that man is gradually losing his freedom. Our standard of living depends upon mass-production; but mass-production is impossible without standardization, and standardization makes it difficult, even impossible, to give our tastes and desires free rein. Instead, our tastes and desires are created and controlled by super-advertising campaigns. Our social trend has been moving steadily toward super-economic organization and vast political controls. Both depend upon centralized planning and competent direction. Although you may defend this trend on the ground that this is the price we must pay for our automobiles, air-conditioners, breakfast cereals, and favorite TV programs, you cannot deny that the individual person becomes more and more one of millions of cogs meshing in a colossal social machine.

This trend will not stop. Greater scientific and technological development will lead to more central organization and an even tighter control of authority on the life of the individual.

Religion and the Individual Person

In great contrast to the social pattern of our life are the belief and heritage of our western civilization, which rest four-square on the sanctity of the individual person.

In western civilization, the ideal of individuality comes from the Bible. Just recall the Bible stories of God's dealing with Adam, His relationship with Abraham, His interest in Jacob and his children. If these epic stories teach anything, they emphasize the importance of the individual, his worth in the sight of God. When God confronts Adam hiding in the garden and asks him "*Ayeka*," "Where art Thou?", the Bible points up the fundamental question which can only be put to a person who is an *individual*, who is not lost in the masses, but can be responsible for himself and is accountable for his actions. All the relationships that unfold themselves in the Bible, between man and God and between man and man, rest on these verses: "Let us make man in our image after our likeness . . . and God created man in His image . . . and He said to them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it." ⁴⁵

Fundamental to the Jewish religion is our concept of the place of the individual person in the scheme of things. The individual person is above nature and the instincts with which nature endowed him, because of his intelligence and power to think. But far beyond this level, man becomes a real person, because he is created in the divine image. He feels within himself that he is of infinite value and worth, that he is unique, independent, a person unlike any other in the

whole world of two billion people. Only in traditional religion and modern psychiatry do we find this deep respect for the individuality of the person. To the social statistician, the value of a single human being in the social equation is infinitesimal, next to nothing. But to the human being himself, and to the infinite God in whose image he is created, the individual is sacred and of infinite value.

As far as the individual is concerned, if he doesn't count—what else matters? *Im ain ani li—mi li?* "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"⁴⁶

The teaching of repentance, according to the *Zohar*, is this: Imagine that all the good and all the evil in the world are evenly balanced on the cosmic scales, and by your individual act of repentance you tip the scales in favor of the good. In this conception of *Tshuvah*, no man is expendable, nor a grain of sand on a vast desert. The individual soul is of infinite cosmic importance when it can turn the heavenly scales to the side of merit.

The Modern Dilemma

The social technological trend creates a manner of life which destroys personality and individuality, and in turn creates mass-men and faceless hollow people. On the other hand, our religious-political-cultural tradition insists that the individual person is of infinite worth, is holy. *Is there room for individuality and personality in modern life?*

If all these observers—psychologist Rollo May, painter de Chirico, sociologist David Reisman, scientist Bertrand Russell—are correct, what will happen to individuality and the person? If increased standardization and automation and the crushing of individuality are the price we must pay for our higher standard of living, is not the price too high? *Of what value social-industrial progress and advancement, if in the*

process we cease to be human beings with individual personalities? Can man continue to increase standardization and automation without destroying the soul of man and the essence of his personality—its freedom? Can man live in the modern world and still be free to retain the image of God in himself?

I believe that individuality, or freedom, or being created in the image of God, is a spiritual quality, a state of mind within us. We are so constructed; God created us this way. But unless we are conscious of this freedom and use it, it can go to sleep and even die.

To be truly aware of one's own freedom is to be religious; to be aware of oneself is the beginning of religion. Alfred North Whitehead said, "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness." William James said, "The pivot around which religion revolves is the interest of the individual in his private destiny." When man is involved in the thick of events and neglects himself, he is not ready for religion nor is he interested in himself. Did not God reveal Himself to Moses in the desert, away from people, through a lowly thorn bush?

The Way of Ritual

How, then, can man find himself? How can man pull himself away from the faceless crowd and say, "I am a person—not a mass-man?" How can a man think a thought which is truly his own and not the reflection of a headline or a TV program? Even if someone in the factory, shop, department store, or office is a part-time, faceless individual, there are moments when he can be himself, true to the "*island within*." Only thus can he retain his identity, his freedom, his individuality.

This is the function of Jewish ritual in terms of our mod-

ern cultural context. It builds up a *sanctum*, an area of individuality, an *island within*, which protects freedom and individuality. The Jewish religion developed ritual to nurture in the individual a concern for his own private destiny. Jewish ritual emphasizes that man is not just a unit in a crowd, a mere speck in the ocean of existence, left to swim, sink, or die, but a precious being under God's care and concern. The purpose of daily prayer and devotion is to strengthen within man this deep conviction and faith in his own destiny and his God, Who never fails.

Circumcision, the *Bris*, is the symbol of the covenant that God made with Abraham. God promised to give Abraham's children the Holy Land, and Abraham promised to obey God's commands. To the Jew as an individual, the *Bris* is the symbol of that covenant and promise. It is a covenant that God renews with anyone who honors and knows that ritual, and the promise is being fulfilled at the very moment when the Jew obeys the commandment. It is the Jew as an individual person who carries on his own flesh the symbol of the covenant and the promise.

The oldest son, the first of the woman's womb, must be redeemed according to the Bible. The reasons for the redemption are Biblical.⁴⁷ The law says that the boy must be one month old before he is eligible for redemption. The Rabbis explain he must be a *Bar Kayama*, a child of being, and this occurs after thirty days when the child is not merely a product, but a person. For the same reason, a child over thirty days old deserves burial as a person, with purification and observance of all the laws of mourning.

What is the significance of Bar Mitzvah? Before Bar Mitzvah, the child is not yet responsible for his own destiny, because he is too immature. At Bar Mitzvah, the child becomes a self-responsible person upon whom rests the obligation to obey the commandments of the Torah. The Rabbis realized

that the goal of religious and ethical maturity is not achieved by merely going through a ceremony, but is a laborious process. They set this time in Jewish life for becoming cognizant of freedom, of the obligation to become independent of parents, to stand on one's own feet and be responsible to God for one's own destiny. In the Bar Mitzvah ritual, we are reminded most clearly to retain our freedom, our individuality, our destiny under God.

The Jewish conception of marriage as a Mitzvah emphasizes the same ideas. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." ⁴⁸ The man should be free and independent of his parents and go out on his own. Here the Rabbis enunciated a self-evident truth which we are repeating: "There are three partners to the making of man: God, Father, and Mother." ⁴⁹ Marriage is a private personal affair. In it two people develop together their individual destinies. In modern times, people must derive even more from marriage than previous generations, because here remains one area in life where there can still be individual freedom and private destiny.

Last, consider the ritual of *Kaddish* and *Yizkor*. Judaism teaches the doctrine of immortality, the continued life of the spirit of man after death. When life on earth is unpleasant, the belief in immortality strengthens; when life on earth is pleasant and man achieves a measure of fulfillment here and now, belief in immortality weakens.

The belief in immortality is evidence that man needs freedom, individuality and destiny to be truly a human being created in the image of God. Because we feel that there is more to the person than the body that is laid to rest, we believe that some part of us lives on. But more important than the metaphysical question as to whether or not there is a soul is the obvious human need for freedom, for individuality, for destiny. While the Bontsche Schweigs are kicked

about over the face of the earth, without being masters of their own destiny, without a sense of individuality and freedom, it is most reassuring to believe in a time when there will be freedom, individuality, and personal destiny. When our Jews, living in a time of the lonely crowd, the hollow people, and the mass-men, recite the *Kaddish*, they affirm by this ritual their belief in the inviolability of man *in this life and in the next life*; they declare their belief that it is *not* man's destiny to be a cog in a vast social machine, but that man has an eternal and sacred personality, and that once born and matured, it can never die.

The *Kaddish-Yizkor* ritual, and all the Jewish rituals for the life cycle of man, not only repeat the old teaching of Judaism, that man is created in the image of God to be free and to grow, to stake out his own destiny. *They will increasingly become the method in a standardized, mechanized, society whereby Jewish man will act out in dramatic fashion his own individuality, his own freedom, his own destiny with God.*

JEWISH PRAYER

American Judaism without Prayer

The Human Need for Prayer

The Art of Prayer

A Life with Prayer

American Judaism without Prayer

Our generation is not given to prayer. This ancient and profound religious experience, this major expression of our culture and way of thinking, seems to have lost its meaning for today's Jews. Under the influence of 19th and 20th century ideologies—Materialism, Scientism, Marxism—prayer has been neglected and even discarded. But the spiritual disillusionment which many people are going through today, and their disappointment with Materialism, Scientism, and Marxism, are causing a reappraisal of widely held attitudes. All but the prejudiced and the lazy-minded are re-examining their attitudes and seeking a new frame of reference for their new faith.

For a clearer insight into our lives, we must examine attitudes which are basic to our way of living, and unmask the assumptions by which we live. This is the method of the sociologist, the student of culture—to observe how people live, the ideals they live by, the values they seek.

The New-Rich

The Jewish Community in the United States is composed of the *nouveau-riche*, *new-rich*. During the early '30's, except for a small number, Jews possessed little property, valuables, or flourishing businesses, and they lived in humble dwellings. In fact, most Jews in those days did not know for sure if they were going to eat at all the following week. Today, twenty-five years later, Jews as a group are prosperous; many are quite wealthy, some are extremely wealthy.

To make this change clearer, think back sixty years. In 1900, Jews in Eastern Europe lived in dire poverty, or were emigrating to leave poverty behind, and in America they were struggling bitterly to overcome poverty. In contrast with 1900, Jews today no longer live in poverty, but in affluence and material abundance. In two generations, the Jewish group in America has moved high up the economic ladder, faster than any other immigrant group. In 1900, 60% of our Jewish immigrants were factory workers; others were mostly peddlers and small merchants. Today, 50% of the American-Jewish earning population are in trade and merchandising; 25% are skilled workers and artisans, and 25% are professionals and "white-collar" workers. In places other than the five largest cities of the United States, there is no Jewish artisan and working class. Social surveys in New England show that the Jews have moved up the social ladder even faster than other ethnic groups in America.

These socio-economic data establish beyond doubt that American Jews as a group have moved quickly into the middle and upper-middle classes. Sociologists, novelists, and cultural historians have analyzed clearly the psychology and attitudes of the new-rich. What have they found?

First of all, the new-rich over-rate *material possessions*. Because they are so abundantly blessed with possessions and have worked so zealously to acquire them, they are—like a little child with a new toy—emotionally preoccupied with material success. They are convinced that only a plethora of material goods, only garish "gadgets" and glamorous new acquisitions, can make life worthwhile. They believe the sordid nonsense that quantity makes for quality, a full fist invariably indicates a full life, and bulging pockets demonstrate good character and refinement of personality. Believing in a shallow materialism, they suppose that he who increases his wealth automatically increases his happiness.

It is easy to understand why almost anyone who gets rich decides that mere possession of wealth is evidence of worth. This usually seems folly to the old-rich, to anyone born to property, with a silver spoon in his mouth, and accustomed to wealth. The old-rich know from long experience that merely because they or their friends have things, this is no sign that they are worth anything. They have learned that money is not in itself really valuable. Happiness, for instance, or love or clear conscience cannot be purchased for money. This the old-rich know well enough; the new-rich rarely discover it until they too have moved into the old-rich category.

The second conviction of the new-rich is the stark necessity of *being comfortable*. They buy all possible gadgets, not merely for health or safety, but to increase comfort: automatic heaters, dryers, wipers, sprinklers, fryers and cookers, power-driving and power-steering; air that is cooled, conditioned, washed, and heated. Is comfort indispensable for man's destiny? I smile inwardly when I behold the dead lying in soft plush coffins as if even our dead must lie in comfort.

The urge for comfort has made us lazy and indolent. When we come home after work, we hate to leave the house but fall instead into a seat to be hypnotized by television. This is a pleasure purely passive and comfortable: we do not exert ourselves, are not required to use our intelligence, or exercise our thought muscles, or even turn a page. We just sit and gaze. The cult for comfort has destroyed our interest in active sports, has turned us into passive observers instead of active participators. Most of us do not play games—we watch them. Our idea of sport is to buy seats in a stadium and watch paid gladiators do combat while we applaud or boo.

It occurs to only a few that the cult of comfort is petty, ignoble, unworthy of the best in human nature. Can it be possible that the human race has struggled upward at the cost

of pain, tears, and death, merely that modern man may sit down and be comfortable?

The third conviction of the new-rich is a compulsion *to conform at all costs*. The new-rich do what all the new-rich are doing: go to the same hotels, buy the same cars, drink the same whiskey, join the same club or Temple, do what is fashionable, follow the crowd. If you want to be invited into the right circles, and move with the right people, and be seen in the right places—conform. Don't dare be different, or even admit the possibility of being different.

The new-rich have little principle or conviction. "I contribute," they say, "to both parties." Their ideals are those of a public relations counsellor, whose by-word is, "Please people; do not offend them." In this class, you become popular by suppressing individuality, conviction, and personal opinion. Instead, you must possess the quality of machine-baked white bread: an even texture all over with very little crust.

These are the three traits of the new-rich: veneration for material success, inordinate love of comfort, and a passion for conformity. Obviously these traits characterize a behavior far wider than the Jewish group alone, and mark the general mass culture of America, which on the lower levels at least is a crowd-culture, basically materialistic, comfort-loving, and conformist. Since most Americans today are among the *nouveau-riche*, the prevalence of this pattern of culture is to be expected. It is all the more a cause for alarm among serious-minded Americans.

The Religion of the New-Rich

The new-rich pattern of behavior has its most serious repercussions in our own Jewish religious behavior, especially in the rise of *religion without prayer*. Although religion has

many forms of expression and social behavior, prayer is the essential vehicle for direct communion with God. In commenting upon the verse, “. . . to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. . . .”⁵⁰ the Talmud asks, “How is one to serve God with all the heart?”, and answers: “Through prayer.”⁵¹ But among the newly rich, with all their conspicuous “religion,” sincere prayer has been smothered and suffocated.

American Jews in the last ten years have spent four hundred million dollars on erecting over two hundred new synagogue buildings. Membership affiliation has increased in all synagogues throughout the country. Externally, this seems to be a lot of Judaism—expensive, conspicuous Judaism. Enter these houses of worship and what do we find? The new synagogues promote an agreeable, pleasant middle-class “religion,” safe and remote. This new Judaism must endanger nothing in particular. It is merely an ornament displayed chiefly for *Yizkor* and Yom Kippur, to show the non-Jew that the Jew also has some “religion.” The Judaism of the new-rich feels at ease only on thickly carpeted synagogue floors and well-leathered pews. It is devoted to causes that are safe, shuns the rigors of real prayer and mysticism, shies away from social reform and social justice. It is always “respectable,” never challenges or upsets.

Domestically, the new-rich Judaism is calculated to make life pleasant in the family circle. Bar Mitzvah is an occasion to show off wealth in conspicuous waste, with cooking on the Sabbath and a general disregard for Jewish religious practice. The leaders of this kind of community usually arrive at Sabbath Services just before the conclusion.

The Confirmation ceremony degenerates into a girl's coming-out affair and sweet-sixteen party rolled into one, where parents entertain lavishly with food and drink in order to introduce their “*bundle of naches*” to the community. Wed-

dings are celebrated in fashionable hotels where non-Kosher food is the mark of distinction. Funerals are conducted elegantly in an atmosphere of restrained refinement where the dead sleeps inoffensively in a garden of sweet-smelling flowers, dressed in his tuxedo as if standing up at a wedding, not lying down at a burial.

For these Jews, the synagogue has become a mutual-admiration society. Every member is self-righteous and respectable, convinced he is good to God and man, puffed up in self-content, self-exaltation, self-adulation. As they sit beaming in their synagogues and temples on Yom Kippur, they are proud—of their wealth, their well educated children, their large and comely houses of “worship.”

But do they *pray*? Do they repent of their *sins*? Do they feel a genuine *need* for God?

In the hearts of some sensitive souls among them lurks an awareness of this callous indifference to spirituality. A college student writes to me: “My Temple has everything from an exquisite and mostly unused chapel to a great and noisy community house in which the young jump about and their elders have smokers and tea parties. It is all impressively active. But is it *religious*? Its people love it, boast about it—but do they ever pray in it?” The prophet Hosea long ago described this rich and conspicuous “Judaism,” this external “religion” which has forgotten prayer and God: “Israel hath forgotten its Maker, and hath builded temples.”⁵²

Our manner of worship and prayer, if it may thus be called, in our new-rich synagogues expresses our materialism, our love of comfort and conformity. We do not pray for ourselves. The cantor, the *Shli-ach Tzi-bur*, messenger for the congregation, does all our praying. The choir performs musical concerts for audiences in vast auditoriums, an organ expresses “religious” ideas for them. Never does worship actually involve the worshipper: he relaxes in his comforta-

ble pew, doing no real service to God while attending "services." He is not a worshipper—he is a spectator of worship by others on his behalf.

In typical middle-class fashion, this kind of worshipper dare not display emotions or feelings, but must keep them, if he has any, under control. When worshippers are ashamed to raise their voices in prayer, the modern synagogue is truly filled with *Leimene Golemes*—statues of clay. Everything in the "service" is mechanical. Rabbi and cantor face the congregation, apparently without need to pray to God themselves; for how can they truly pray and direct their thoughts to God when they know that their every gesture, every twitch of lip or eye, is being carefully scrutinized by the congregation? Like cheer-leaders at a football game, they lead not a congregation, but a "crowd." The whole "crowd" must respond together in unison, the whole "crowd" must stand up together and sit down together, on signal.

This is a far cry from the thrilling worship of a congregation all filled with the spirit of holiness, all chanting, singing and reciting, standing and swaying together out of common inward emotions. Here each individual gives expression to inner spiritual feelings, and finds these feelings fortified by others joined with him in prayer and tied to him by a mutual experience. In the new-rich worship, where there is no feeling, no emotion or integrity, no religious individuality, there can be no congregation. There is only a vast well-mannered crowd held together by external "gimmicks," instructions issued by the "cheer-leaders" to a tempo set by a choir-and-organ "band."

Our Great Challenge

The Jew gave prayer to western civilization; our Book of Psalms is the basic source book for worship in churches.

But do *Jews* pray today? We have inherited the physical qualities of Jewishness from our fathers, but have we taken over their spiritual qualities? Biologically we are Jews; but are we Jews spiritually? Our hands are the hands of Jacob; but is our voice the voice of Jacob?

Our pre-occupation with materialism, comfort and conformity is bad for our souls and bad for our society. American Jewry must rediscover the Source of reality that makes for spirituality and prayer. We must critically examine our way of life and go about resisting the unwholesome aspects of it. The synagogue must restore sanctity and holiness in its worship and bring their influence into our daily lives. Jews must resist crowd-culture, and through their synagogues help all America return to the spiritual values of its founders while they themselves become renewed in the spirit of their own ancestors.

The Human Need for Prayer

During the *Yamim Nora-im*, "Days of Awe," most Jews find their way into a synagogue or temple to spend some moments in prayer and contemplation. Consciously or unconsciously, the worshipping Jew is fulfilling some basic human need for prayer. Despite the distractions that draw an iron curtain between man and God, there still arise many occasions in life when a man has no other recourse but to pray. Praying is actually the way we meet five basic human needs.

The Unusual or Pathological Need

When do people call a doctor? Only when in pain, when the normal functions of the organism break down or are disrupted. This pathological situation occurs as well on the spiritual level. In the life of man, individually or collectively, when the normal order of events is upset, when great uncertainty overhangs the horizon, when a mood of impending doom troubles the human breast, then man turns to a supra-human power—"to fix it." We seek God as a sort of universal doctor to heal our private or collective sickness.

"There are no atheists in foxholes"—this was the popular judgment shortly after the war, and the experience of "combat" or "crisis" religion is familiar to all of us. When people confront a great unknown danger, they seek assurance in the face of imminent catastrophe, somewhat as people whistle their way past a cemetery or as babies babble to themselves when left alone to go to sleep.

Our need for security in an unfriendly environment partly accounts for the recent renewed interest in religion in face of the horrifying threat of hydrogen bomb warfare. The motive behind this need for prayer is *human weakness*. When a man is calm and healthy or when society is orderly and ra-

tional, we feel self-sufficient and self-confident, and have no need for suprahuman support. Man then seems adequate unto himself. On the other hand, when a man under crisis realizes that he is not self-sufficient or self-reliant, but needs something or someone beyond himself for support and strength, he will turn to God in prayer. When a man is "cut down to size," he is ready to pray no matter how irreligious or atheistic he has claimed to be.

From the nature of this *pathological* need for prayer, we get an insight into *normal* need for prayer. The connecting link between the two is man's creatureliness. Once we realize that man always needs a Supreme Power for help, that we are never self-sufficient, we accept the *constant* need for prayer. In Pathological Prayer, a man must be in a "fox hole" in pain, in want—or society must be in a dire predicament, confronting doom and destruction. In Normal Prayer, man realizes his limitations, his dependence in this vast universe upon its Creator, and is therefore moved to pray. Aware of his frailties and human limitations, man prays to the Creator because *he* is only a creature.

The Mechanical Need

The orthodox of all religions believe that the proper prayer uttered at the appropriate time guarantees the needed result. This is why and how simple orthodoxy prays. A dependence upon God and full faith in Him establish, for real believers, a wholesome relationship with Him. The pious believe that if a worshipper performs his religious discipline daily and regularly, he has fulfilled God's command and has found grace in His sight; his needs and wants both in this world and in eternity are thereby assured.

Many people of this outlook repeat their prayers mechanically, almost without thought and conviction. They merely

recite, and have supreme faith in the efficacy of the mere formula of prayer: the correct formula will bring the harmonious result. Usually, only the uneducated and the naively pious indulge in this type of prayer. The critically-minded deprecate it because it is thoughtless and mechanical. It wins only ridicule from the more sophisticated, who demand reason and understanding in religious behavior. The *Shulchan Aruch* itself, the great law code of Orthodox Judaism, is severely critical of mechanical prayer.

We ought to be aware, however, of the merits of this type of prayer. When other people have altogether forgotten how to pray, these worshippers retain a deep faith in the efficacy of their prayer. These people possess a fundamental humility, an innate respect for holiness, for the whole institution of prayer, and the accompanying religious institution. They feel the mystery in the universe. These faithful worshippers have said, "God is always right; man is always wrong." If prayers are not answered, the fault lies with man—not God. All this is a healthy thing.

The Sociological Need

The person who prays to fill this need worships not so much because he is aware of God as because he is aware of his fellow human beings. Prayer for him is a form of social activity. According to his view, prayer in primitive, ancient, medieval, and modern societies is chiefly a community exercise. The shaman, priest, holy man, mullah, monk, lama, minister, priest, and rabbi all dress in impressive regalia to unite the people of the tribe, city, state, village, hamlet, congregation, or community. People gather in temple, mosque, church, pagoda, dewal, and synagogue to recite prayers collectively as a method of uniting in time of challenge and need.

Many modern Jewish thinkers in our country, reflecting present day secularism, have defined Jewish prayer in this sociological manner. "Prayer on the Sabbath in the Synagogue," they say, "is the technique of integrating the individual Jew with the Jewish people." Prayer thus becomes almost a political enterprise. Jews join synagogues and temples not because they want to pray to God, but to be associated and identified with other Jews. God serves merely as a social symbol, the apotheosis of all that is Jewish or desirable, all that is socially noble or humanly valuable. The sociological theory of prayer implies that man does not seek identification with God, but association with other men. Because American Jewry comes to its synagogues and temples primarily to fill a sociological need, these institutions have become social centers where prayer is relegated to the background. The form and ritual of worship is geared to social consciousness: the conspicuous pews are occupied by wealth, women dress ostentatiously, not in keeping with the spirit of piety and humility.

The merits of this kind of prayer are evident. It develops group solidarity, group values, and feeling for survival. Its demerits are also evident. This kind of prayer smothers individuality. Whitehead has defined religion as "what man does with his solitariness," and sociological prayer stifles solitariness. It underplays the reality of God—in fact, does not need God. Sociological prayer is group cheering for "home-team" values. Hence, congregational and responsive readings extol the values of truth, justice, righteousness, tolerance, brotherhood, equality and freedom as *social*, not *religious* ideals—ideals that could be as well proclaimed in lecture hall, law court, class room, or patriotic rally. For in sociological prayer these ideals have been divorced from God, are cut off from any religious contact with the Source of all reality. Sociological orientation turns religious ideals into secular social values.

In reciting these "liberal-political" ideals, the worshipper does not experience the wonder and mystery of true prayer, but participates only in the glorification of civic virtues.

The Psychiatric Need

Every normal person is filled with guilt feelings of tremendous variety—witness the impressive list of *Al-Chet* statements recited on Yom Kippur in the confessional. The average person has a conscience, and is troubled by it; in prayer, he finds an opportunity to unburden himself, to get rid of his guilt feelings. God is our Grand Psychiatrist, prayer our spiritual bath, by which man can wash out his conscience and remove all the selfish grime, cheating mud and double-standard dirt that has been collecting on it. After prayer and confession of sins, a person is restored to good standing, and need no longer feel ashamed and guilt-ridden. After prayer, a man can be at peace with himself and the world.

The advantages of this kind of prayer are many. It gives us inner peace, so that our souls are not troubled or tormented. Many ailments of emotional origin could be healed if people would turn to prayer to rid themselves of their guilt feelings and sense of shortcoming. This kind of prayer can help take pressure off our daily tasks, ease the complexities of modern life. It can breathe into us an air of hope and optimism. Man would not be overburdened with too many unresolved problems; prayer and God's forgiveness would bring release and rest.

Some critics, however, find in psychiatric prayer a moral softness, an indifference to individual and social immorality. They say it develops habitual obtuseness toward sin. "Why worry?" we say. "Why be concerned about social injustice? God will forgive my indifference and neutrality!" We need to remember that Judaism also teaches, along with God's

mercy and forgiveness, His demand for justice. On the first verse in the Bible, "In the beginning Elokim (God of justice, *din*,) created heaven and earth," the Rabbis comment in the *Midrash*: "It does not say *Yahveh* (the Lord), for *Yahveh* means God of mercy, *rachamim*. Originally the intention was to create the world with the quality of justice, but the world could not exist by this alone, so God (Elokim) therefore put first the quality of mercy, and created a world founded on both mercy and justice." ⁵³

Judaism teaches that when man sins, by acts of commission or omission, the God of justice demands restitution and correction. God is, however, also merciful and will forgive. There is no contradiction between the God of Amos and the God of Hosea, the God of Elijah and the God of the Besht (Bal Shem Tov). God is both the goad to an easy conscience, and the balm to a troubled one. In Judaism we believe in God who commands justice and demands holiness, but who grants love and mercy to those who fall short of the ideal. God is Judge as well as psychiatrist: He demands obedience to Law, yet grants forgiveness. He is *Avinu Mal-kenu* our Father and our King.

Modern Jews have not learned yet how to drink from this forgiving fount of prayer. Modern man can well benefit from the remedial influences of *charismatic* (cleansing) prayer.

The Philosophic Need

Modern man lives in a world of great change. Not only technological change, which is evident to everybody, nor only social change, which is evident to all keen observers. Change is reflected even in our spiritual insights and fundamental values of life. There is a basic human need today for values that are durable, meaningful, everlasting, and beyond change. In a world of flux and fleeting fermentation, man needs a

basis of strength, a ground for direction. Modern man says with Archimedes, after his discovery of the fulcrum, "Give me a place to stand, so I can move the world." The human need for God, today, is man's need for meaning and fulfillment. In Philosophic Prayer man finds the meaning of human existence and his highest destiny.

Most people pass through life in a state of semi-anesthesia. We perform our duties, maintain our relationships, and go through the motions of living—business, marriage, family, friends, death. Only the peaks of pleasure or pain are remembered, the dull plateaus forgotten. We maintain superficial standards and claim to live by rules of decency. Nevertheless, we are tempted, and many times we yield, to make compromises and accept convenience. We are willing to pay the price, especially if we can "get it wholesale." We know the platitudes—but they are for the books. They seem so irrelevant, so out of date. In moments of solitariness, we raise fundamental questions: What is our life—born to die? Does it all have any meaning? Is life mere pleasure and pain? What gives us pleasure, what causes pain?

When man turns his attention to God, in prayer, he discovers the meaning of the whole process. He directs his soul to God and makes his own life on earth meaningful. In seeing God as the Being for worship and Maker of the universe, man discovers himself. If we do not worship and pray to God, we find ourselves engaged in many activities that, at best, are of temporary importance and of passing interest. In prayer, we gain perspective on our various tasks and activities, and thereby bestow a proper grade and value to every task. Through the help of prayer we learn to distinguish between the lesser and higher tasks in the life of man. Man cannot see the forest because of the trees. By dealing with things, by using things, by studying things, by adjusting to things, man *becomes* a thing. He loses his significance, his

individuality, his *personality*. When man is so involved in a vast complex of things he loses his individual entity, he ceases to be.

In prayer, when man turns to God, man becomes *himself*, is born anew in prayer. There is self discovery, for in prayer, man becomes a person with a self—not lost in the things he makes, the things he sells, the things he studies, the things he uses. In prayer, when we seek God, we rise above the material world; we become its master, not its slave. Man finds *himself* in prayer; and after prayer he expresses his self in living his life on earth under God.

Therefore, prayer is a form of revelation: it gives the world back to man. First, man must leave behind the world and seek God in prayer; after prayer, returning to the world, he discovers it anew. To live properly in the world, to enjoy it fully, know it truthfully, man must *leave* the world, get *beyond* it and then return to a *new* world. This is the need fulfilled in Philosophic Prayer by which man discovers himself and discovers the world. This discovery gives him new meaning, helps him toward self-fulfillment.

Prof. H. N. Wieman, in discussing this idea of prayer, gave the following illustration: Life is the apple Adam sought in the Garden of Eden; prayer is the hand that holds the apple; Science, business, social behavior, and so on, are the teeth that nibble at the apple. If we do not pray to God (if we do not hold aloft the apple), the teeth may chew the air, the dirt, or anything else but the apple. If mankind desires to eat its apple in its Garden of Eden, it must first hold it—mankind must pray.

The five human needs for prayer will operate differently in each individual, as he worships in temple or synagogue. The awareness of the psycho-dynamics involved will help each of us to derive more from worship and to fulfill that need which is our greatest.

The Art of Prayer

When Rabbi Eliezer, the second-generation Tanna, was near death, his students visited their master to ask how to achieve eternal life. He told them: "When you pray, know before whom you stand."⁵⁴ This admonition encompasses three basic ideas: knowledge of God, submission to God, and meeting God.

Knowledge

Prayer, according to Jewish insight, is based on knowledge: "*Know* before whom you stand." This presumes intellectual understanding and assent. Reflection precedes faith, for prayer is not superstition. Accordingly, the Rabbis taught: "If there is no knowledge, how can there be prayer?"⁵⁵

On Sabbath morning we recite *Pesukay DeZimra*, "The Verses of Song," composed of selected Psalms elaborating on the knowledge of God. The rabbinic editors realized that a mood of reverence and worship is predicated on awareness of God. These introductory psalms engender this awareness by leading the worshipper to focus his attention upon the universe in which God is manifest. "The Verses of Song" open before his mind's eye the grandeur of the astronomer's vision, beholding the galaxies of an expanding universe: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. . . . Before the mountains were brought forth, or ere thou gavest birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. . . . To him that by understanding made the heavens, for his loving kindness endureth forever. . . . He counteth the number of stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding is infinite.*⁵⁶

As a preliminary to communion with God, the praying Jew

speaks first of facts and beliefs about the Lord of the universe. Immanuel Kant, the great 19th century philosopher, wrote: "There are two things that fill my soul with holy reverence and ever-growing wonder—the spectacle of the starry sky that virtually annihilates us as physical beings, and the moral Law which raises us to infinite dignity as intelligent human beings."⁵⁷ The Jew, too, begins his prayer with reverent wonder at the universe and its Maker.

Even more wonderful, however, is that man is aware of this wonder and his place in it. That the creature has the intelligence to appreciate the work of the Creator is the basis of Jewish prayer. Prayer arises when the creature seeks a meeting with the Creator. When infinitesimal intelligence confronts infinite Intelligence, "Verses of Song" well up in the heart.

Man's awareness of his place in the universe assures him of his spiritual transcendence, which in turn makes him aware of Universal Transcendence. This is the Biblical way to the knowledge of God. Intellectual experience—the "I think, therefore I am" of Descartes—makes us see and comprehend the world through the reasoning mind. The Psalmist, however, believed that the phenomenon of man's intelligence indicates the existence of the Supra-intelligence that is God—"I think, therefore God is." The intelligence of the universe, its beauty, and their source in the reality of the Lord of the universe, constitute the message and the lesson of the "Verses of Song" which prepare the Jew for prayer as they give him "knowledge" of God and his works.

There are differences between our knowledge of the seen and of the unseen; between our knowledge of what we can grasp and of what is beyond our grasp; between our knowledge of what we can prove and of what we cannot substantiate by concrete proof. Jewish thinkers recognized these differences. A central theme of the Book of Job is that God's

actions defy human understanding. Nevertheless, man attempts to understand and know God. The medieval Jewish philosophers, like many Talmudic sages before them, emphasized this deeply rooted quest for knowledge and understanding as a precondition of faith. The Jewish thinkers, however, though they were basically rationalists and appreciated the faculty of human reason, also recognized the limitations of reason. Jewish rationalism knew its limits, knew that beyond those limits lies the mystery of faith. Jewish religious rationalism, like the "Verses of Song," leads to the recognition of the cosmic evidence of God's power and glory—the recognition where faith begins.

"Who" and "What"

The second lesson contained in Rabbi Eliezer's precept is "know before whom." Not before *what*, but *whom*. There is a sharp difference between *who* and *what*: *who* is subject and personality, *what* is object and impersonal force. One can pray to a *who* and be heard; one cannot pray to a *what* with any hope of response. A divine Who can respond, but an impersonal *what*, by its very nature, cannot be concerned with human needs and hopes. "I-and-Thou," in Buber's terminology, is a person-to-person relationship; "I-and-It," a person-to-thing relationship.

The essence of the true religious experience is to sense the reality of the universal *who* in an I-and-You relationship. Prayer can best arise when the worshipper feels that the universal "You" shares his concern about life, intelligence, peace, truth, righteousness and justice. With all the humility a person must have when he approaches God, nevertheless the person-in-prayer must approach Him as Moses did, "as a man talking to his friend."⁵⁸

Attempts are often made to "revive" Jewish prayer by

anodynes or surgical operations. New prayer books shorten some prayers, eliminate others, add new ones, change the tense of the prayers. But these methods cannot revive prayer if the worshippers do not already feel that they are praying to a *Who*. You cannot pray in earnest unless you are sure that you are praying to a God who *hears* you. The real problem of prayer is not the prayer text or the place where prayer is offered up, but *God*. Do we believe that the Universe is directed by a Power Who is real, active, personal, creative, the source of all human values and personally concerned to help us sustain these values? If we believe this, then we can truly pray. If we do not believe it, then prayer is meaningless and is only a sociological exercise of national or political significance.

The Talmud thus describes the meeting of the divine Who and man: "Just as the Lord fills the world, so the soul fills the body. Just as the Lord sees and is not seen, so the soul sees and is not seen. Just as the Lord sustains the world, so the soul sustains the body. Just as the Lord is pure, so the soul is pure. Just as the Lord resides in secret recesses, so the soul resides in secret recesses. Therefore let him who possesses these five qualities come and praise Him Who possesses these five qualities." ⁵⁹ God is the infinite counterpart of man; hence, man can pray to God. Good men seek to build a moral society and an order based on justice and righteousness. God, the Creator of the universe, is intimately concerned with man's noblest desires and helps him to realize them. God and man are partners in the cosmic adventure of perfecting the world, and man needs to turn to God for help and guidance. This is the setting for true prayer.

Man's knowledge of God is limited. By reason and reflection we can attain only an elementary knowledge of God. But reason is not the only road to knowledge of life's values.

There is another kind of reaching out, by means of prayer, beyond reason into the realm of faith.

In this "reaching out" we assert our faith in God. "We stand before," as Rabbi Eliezer phrased it, in trust and self commitment. This trust and faith do not go unanswered. In reaching out to God in sincere prayer we are "answered" by the experience of God's nearness, by feeling the very presence of God. This feeling is overwhelming and beyond description—it can only be experienced, not put into words. One might as well try to describe the color purple to a color-blind person, or the smell of a rose to a person who never smelled one. Prayer *starts* with reasoning, but must advance to *faith*, if we are to experience God's nearness.

To approach God through reason and thought may be difficult, but at least there is guidance available. To reach God through faith and experience is a lonesome path. Each of us must do this by himself. Indeed, we are all joined together in the synagogue—yet each of us confronts God alone.

Kavanah

How can we achieve faith and the experience of God? How reach out to God in prayer? The answer is *Kavanah*—we must put our heart into it and concentrate.

Maimonides taught that "prayer without *Kavanah* is not prayer. Therefore, he who prayed without *Kavanah* must repeat the prayers with *Kavanah*."⁶⁰ To pray effectively we must detach ourselves from our work-a-day routine and thought. We must concentrate upon God and seek to reach out beyond ourselves into the Infinite. *Kavanah* is the quest of detachment and reaching out, as the part, which is the self of man, seeks to unite with the Whole, which is God.

How does one achieve *Kavanah*? By reading the prayers

with attentive concentration. By dwelling and meditating on the words and sentences one knows well, holding on to them as a safe anchor. At first, we may be like a new swimmer, afraid to venture beyond our depth. But as we gain experience, we find the water reassuring, relaxing. So it is with prayer. As we pray regularly and get to know the words, they carry us along, we can float on them.

Some worshippers sway as they pray. Like the athlete who does calisthenics to limber up his muscles, so the person who wants to pray, too, needs to "loosen up" spiritually for proper emotional reflexes. He prays with his entire body, not only his voice.

Chanting and singing, too, have their places in prayer. Our emotions are intertwined with our bodily actions. How can our soul reach out for God if our mouth is frozen shut? Singing out loud, praying out loud, enable us to reach out better in prayer.

There are thus five steps to attaining this "reaching out":

1. Psychological preparedness for prayer by coming to the synagogue.
2. Meditation in silence upon entering the synagogue.
3. Concentration upon God and His universe.
4. Reading the prayers with *Kavanah*.
5. Chanting loudly and "floating" on the words and the melody.

Inevitably, you will not be immediately successful in your attempt to reach out to God. But as you repeat these exercises in prayer, you are bound to come closer to the goal of feeling united with God. Jewish tradition vouchsafes that those who seek God in truth shall find Him: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in Truth."⁶¹

A Life with Prayer

The Jewish ideal of the good life for man is not asceticism. Judaism does not teach withdrawal from life and its "corrupting" influences. Rather, Judaism expects man to live *in* the world, but to *change* the world and cleanse its corruption.

From this ethical view, it follows that the Jewish ideal of prayer, as it should be practiced in daily life, does not demand withdrawal into constant meditation. A life with prayer, according to Judaism, is a life of alternation between work and worship: a person pursues his daily tasks before and after his prayer activity. The Bible commands: "Six days shalt thou do all thy work—and the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord thy God."⁶² As the Sabbath introduces the principle of alternation into the week, prayer introduces alternation into the Jewish day. It is by this alternation between prayer and activity that prayer influences the life of man.

Low Prayer

What happens to a person who prays regularly? What does prayer do for him? And does prayer really work?

There are different kinds of prayer and they work in different ways. The first kind might be called Low Prayer. Here the worshipper asks something of God for himself—he has an unfilled personal need and seeks the aid of God in filling that need. In so praying to God, the worshipper displays complete trust and firm conviction. The greater the need, the stronger is his conviction, and the deeper the sincerity with which he prays.

We often read of miraculous cures which come after sincere prayer. People who are unable to walk pray in a holy place, and are seen leaving without physical support. These "miracles" are not denied by scientists, who generally explain

them away as the result of auto-suggestion. The healing comes from within, not from outside. The praying person is so convinced of the powers of a particular place that by his own great conviction he suggests to himself that now he can walk. The prayer merely releases inner blocks, opens up locked emotions. The field of psychosomatic medicine gives new insight into maladies cured by prayer, and apparently rejects the theory that prayer really works—as prayer.

At Duke University in North Carolina and the University of Cambridge in England, experiments have been conducted in a field which used to be called “psychical research” and is now accepted as “parapsychology.” These experiments shed some light on why prayers are answered. The Nobel Prize winner Charles Richet, J. B. Rhine, and others are doing significant research in this field, and their findings are published in a *Journal of Parapsychology*. These investigators have demonstrated a mental factor called E.S.P.—extra-sensory perception—which can influence the material world: mind over matter.

When a “crap-shooter” exhorts dice to turn up the way he hopes they will, if he truly tries hard enough, he can influence the dice. This influence is psychic, extra-sensory: there is no material contact we know of between the mind of the manipulator and the objects he manipulates. If this E.S.P. factor is present in our world, it is generated entirely in the minds of men. When a person concentrates on telepathy (mind reading) or telekinesis (mental manipulation), he is projecting his consciousness into another’s mind or onto an object.

In prayer, according to this view, a person projects his own E.S.P. or extra-sensory perception onto the Universal Soul, or God. This approach agrees with what religion has been saying all these centuries—that the world is more than matter, that it includes non-material substance or spirit, and that there is a Soul in man and a God in the world. Man, by

concentration in prayer, can project his own E.S.P. and send it to God. Apparently a devout petition uttered with complete faith and great intensity will work, not because of auto-suggestion, but through E.S.P., for the same reason and in the same way that "influencing the dice" works.

E.S.P. explains why certain prayers are not answered: because other people are praying for the opposite. One person prays for a hot, dry summer, another for a cool, wet summer. In this jam-up of E.S.P. "waves," only one message will get through. Or else the person praying is not concentrating deeply enough and so his E.S.P. "wave" does not reach its goal.

At any rate, a prayer in which a person asks something only for himself is called Low Prayer. Prayer for material things only is also Low Prayer.

What happens to a person who gets most of the things that make life pleasant? He stops praying—that is, he stops praying Low Prayers. This man has three good meals a day, he has health, a roof over his head, his Cadillac and his sports car, his wife's mink coat, and so on. Is there anything else to pray for? If a man lives by bread alone and for himself alone, the answer is: nothing. This kind of man has no need even for Low Prayer. Low Prayer always brings a decline in prayer, when needs are satisfied. We see this decline of prayer these days among Jews because God is of no "practical" use to them. Jews are well-fixed, they have economic security and material success. Why pray?

Most people, when they come running to a synagogue or church, come to pray Low Prayers. For them, a House of Worship is a drug counter where God is the clerk: "Give me this, give me that!" After the customer gets what he wants, he doesn't return until he is in need again.

This is Low Prayer, self-centered and materialistic. It defeats itself, because it stagnates in times of prosperity and

good fortune. When a man advances to Middle Prayer and grows spiritually and culturally, he has no further need for Low Prayer. Low Prayer must either stagnate or advance to Middle Prayer.

Middle Prayer

Middle Prayer is petition for the welfare, material or spiritual, of others, or for your own spiritual and moral advancement rather than material improvement.

Jewish prayer on the week-days, Sabbath, Festivals, and High Holy Days is mainly Middle Prayer. We petition God to infuse our beings with spiritual blessings: love of Torah; the will to obey his *Mitzvos*; repentance and forgiveness; reunion of all the dispersed of our people in Jerusalem and the Land of Israel; arrival of the Messiah; and so on. When we petition God, we ask for deliverance from affliction, for good health, healing, material abundance—for others as well as for ourselves. These prayers are recited in the plural, to include the whole congregation, community, world. A cooperative, collective feeling permeates the prayers. "Cause *us*," we say, "to return to Thy Torah . . . Forgive *us*, O, our Father . . . Heal *us*, O Lord, and *we* shall be saved . . . Bless this year unto *us* . . . O, satisfy *us* with Thy goodness." ⁶⁸

The whole *Al Chet* confessional on Yom Kippur is in first person plural: *Al chet shechatanu*, "For the sin *we* have sinned." Again, a cooperative, collective mood. Each of us is called upon to feel guilty for the sinfulness of his neighbor, for we should feel responsible for the sinner's waywardness. We too are part of society, whose actions or neglect may have contributed to sin.

Middle Prayer helps us overcome our selfishness, our greed, our jealousy, our egocentricity. In Middle Prayer we outgrow the desire to amass personal wealth; rather, we pray

that all may be blessed with wealth. In Middle Prayer we outgrow our selfish ego; we have developed the cooperative feeling, we worry as much for our neighbor as for ourselves. Middle Prayer makes us sensitive to other people's feelings and needs—because we pray for them. Because we are more preoccupied with other people's needs and less concerned with our own, we overcome self-centeredness. We forgive those who wrong us and learn to understand the selfish and the narrow-minded. We feel sorry for them, and pray for them.

In Middle Prayer we are still concerned with ourselves, but for spiritual self-improvement. We seek humility; we ask help in overcoming greed, learning to live and be happy with little; we pray to grow in sympathy for the weak and inability to help the needy.

All this explains how Middle Prayer changes the person praying. By opening his mind and soul to God's penetrating influence, the worshipper can be transformed. But does Middle Prayer have any influence upon the other person in whose behalf we are praying? Can the prayer of a good man influence the behavior of a bad man?

Let us go back to E.S.P., which can, supposedly, influence a person when he opens his mind to the projection of someone else's soul and spirit. But if the evil person persists in his evil, and keeps his mind locked against any outside influence, our prayers for his improvement cannot penetrate.⁶⁴ Middle Prayer can, however, influence other people who sincerely wish to be transformed. My prayers for another person's improvement can be effective, if that person will join his efforts to mine, assist and work in the same direction, if he opens his own soul and mind to the influence of God.

To be successful in Middle Prayer is difficult. It seems almost unnatural to pray for another's physical welfare and your own spiritual welfare.⁶⁵ Successful Middle Prayer

means, almost, being able to jump out of your own skin. It means thinking of someone else in the way you find most natural to think of yourself. It means, at the ideal level, that you must be entirely self-less.

The average person, of course, never reaches the ideal level in Middle Prayer, but wavers between Low Prayer and Middle Prayer. When we pray God to "inscribe us in the Book of Life," we primarily mean, "First inscribe *me* in the Book of Life—then inscribe the others." Only when we have enough for ourselves do we consent to give a little charity to others. We give the other person the benefit of the doubt only when we ourselves feel secure and beyond any doubt. This is the man as he is born, and so he lives.

But Middle Prayer, if we strive for it sincerely, can help us outgrow our innate selfishness and reach toward the higher levels of humility, charity, mercy, love, and forgiveness. A complete transformation needs the further help of God. Only as the worshipper prays to God and asks for help, will it gradually come to him.

High Prayer

After the worshipper has overcome the limitations of Low Prayer, after he puts behind him all desire for personal gain, after his soul develops and grows under the influence of Middle Prayer, the worshipper is prepared to leave *everything* behind him and seek only the contemplation and adoration of God. High Prayer means raising the "self" beyond itself and beyond the collective self onto the highest resting place: God Himself. Low Prayer is self-conscious, Middle Prayer is group-conscious, High Prayer is God-conscious. In High Prayer, the soul of man yearns for the spirituality that comes from God. The worshipper asks nothing for anybody, but contemplates and meditates upon the glory

of God. The Hebrew word for High Prayer is *d'vaikus*—attachment.

A good example of High Prayer in our Siddur, in which the worshipper is contented to bask in the glory of God and imbibe the Holiness of God, is the *Kedushah*, the Sanctification which we recite twice daily. The congregation says, "We will sanctify Thy Name in this world as the angels sanctify it in the highest heavens, as it is written by Thy prophet: And the angels called one to another: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." The angels opposite them say: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place." ⁶⁶

Only a few chosen people graduate from Middle Prayer into High Prayer; only the truly pious and conscientious reach this lofty pinnacle of existence. The holy person who achieves this level actually seeks nothing *from* this world or its people. He seeks to give *to* others and do *for* others. He seeks to share his blessed state of being, his closeness to the radiation of God, with others. The *Chazon Ish* who lived in Israel and recently died was such a man; the *Chofetz Chayim* of the previous generation was such a man; *Rav Kook* was such a man *par excellence*. Among non-Jews, people say Gandhi was such a man.

You have met old men who have begun to reach such a position in their existence. Money has lost its attraction for them; the pleasures of the flesh are gone; all they ask is to live a little longer to pray to God and do good to their fellow men. It is most pleasant to be in their company. Their conversation is mild; their talk is intelligent, rich with experience; their self-seeking has all died. They sit quietly in their mellowness, and exude a serenity that comes only with age and understanding. Sometimes a younger person has this quality—but only through entering the portals of High Prayer.

Growth in Prayer

A soul or personality can cultivate itself through the various stages of prayer. As the soul grows and extends its consciousness from selfish Low Prayer, through cooperative Middle Prayer, into selfless High Prayer, it becomes *eternal*. Immortality is life for the soul after the body dies. But what is the soul's occupation after death? The soul continues then to grow in consciousness in the presence of the Holy Spirit of God—the *shechinah*. The Rabbis teach us: "After death, the pious sit and enjoy the glow of *shechinah*." ⁶⁷

The average Jew who worships regularly, or even upon rare occasion, tastes the joys of all three types of prayer. In our regular daily or festival prayers are words on all three levels, and the praying Jew can worship on all these levels depending upon his training, his knowledge, his spiritual sensitivity.

If the Jew daily alternates between his usual activities and prayer, he keeps a healthy balance between the world of activity and the world of contemplation. As the Jew enters the synagogue to pray every Sabbath and nourish his spirit, he helps his soul to grow along the graded steps of prayer. As he prays regularly and with conviction, his whole character and personality become transformed. Such a man or woman continues to grow as he continues to pray.

HALACHAH

Understanding of Halachah

Theories about Halachah

Change and Authority

Understanding Halachah

We have seen that a Jew cannot grow in his Jewishness or accept his Judaism unless he is willing to accept himself as a Jew, and then follow the direction and dictates of his mind and heart. We have examined the mind and heart of the authentic Jew and found explanations for his participation in a life of prayer, and adherence to ritual. In this discussion we go a little deeper into the understanding of our religion, and learn something about its most distinguishing characteristic—the Torah and its Halachah, and why we need them in Jewish life.

Halachah comes from the root word, *haloch*, “to walk”; *halichah* means “the act of walking.” Halachah is closely related and means “process of action” or a “way of doing things”—in a word, “usage.”

All of Jewish classic thought and intellectual effort can be divided into two categories: *Halachah* and *Aggadah*. Halachah includes all the Jewish law, religious, civil and criminal; Aggadah includes all Jewish poetry, philosophy, history and legend.

In this chapter we will consider certain basic concepts, and thus be equipped to understand more clearly the indivisibility between Halachah and Judaism—the fact that if you take away the Halachah all you have is a “Jewnitarian” religion, but not Judaism.

Higher Unity of the Bible

The word “Bible” simply means “book”—*the* Book, a great Book—but does not indicate what kind of book it is.

In Hebrew, this primary source of Judaism is called "Tanach," a term based on the three Hebrew initials, T-N-CH (or K), for the three-part division of the Bible: *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, *Kesuvim*—Law or Teaching, Prophets, and Writings. The Hebrew word for Bible does tell us something about its contents and character. This three-part division was clearly known in the 2nd century B.C.E., when the Greek translator of the Book of Sirach speaks in his preface of the great many gifts delivered to Israel, "the Law, and the Prophets, and the others that followed upon them." But even then, this tripartition was already an ancient tradition. Jeremiah's opponents, about 630 B.C.E. countered his forebodings by defiantly assuring the people that there will be *Torah* forthcoming from the priest, and *word* from the prophet, and *counsel* from the wise men.⁶⁸

Torah, taught by the *Kohanim* or priests, was first of all the law governing matters between clean and unclean, holy and common, matters of ritual sacrifices in the Temple. All such sections begin with the expression, "*zos toras*" ("This is the law of . . .").

But the priest was also *judge*. The legislation in Deuteronomy⁶⁹ establishes a judicial-court system, all resting upon the *Kohen* or priest. The legal decrees or judgments, *mishpatim*, are also called Torah.

To the priest, the husband took the wife suspected of infidelity.⁷⁰ In the presence of the priest, men and women poured out their soul before God, as in the story of Hannah, the mother of Samuel.⁷¹ The priest held persons to their vows,⁷² and he received confessions.⁷³ The priest was considered the messenger of God to the people: "At his mouth the people sought Torah and he turned many away from sin."⁷⁴

Ministering at the sanctuary, blessing the people, teaching the Torah constituted the priest's activity. Into the priest's

keeping was placed the task of instruction for every emergency in life of the nation and the individual, *the whole* of the Torah of God: it was he who possessed the Light and the Truth, the Urim V'tumim, and was consulted by king and general and commoner.

The Torah which was administered by the *Kohanim* as a system of law governed ritual, social, civil and criminal procedure. Read for yourself Chapters 21–23 in Exodus, called the “Book of the Covenant,” or the Deuteronomic Code, Chapters 12–26, or the Holiness Code in Leviticus, Chapters 17–26, especially its most illuminating Chapter 19. It is significant that Higher Bible Criticism calls these documents *codes*. They are rules and regulations of behavior—Halachah.

Now, do not get the impression that the Halachah which the *Kohen* administered was a dry, rigid, cold bureaucratic system of law. The greatest moral and religious principles of mankind are part of these “codes.” The Decalogue itself is basically a code enunciating fundamental spiritual principles, the greatest being the principle of monotheism. The Ten Commandments were no doubt taught by the priesthood along with the rules for ritual cleanliness. In the introduction to the Deuteronomic Code are found the *Shma*,⁷⁵ “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy might,” the Second Decalogue,⁷⁶ the great ethical dicta: “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy soul?,” and the model for the famous Micah passage;⁷⁷ “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked . . . Love ye therefore the stranger because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”⁷⁸

To help clear up any misconceptions in your mind about Torah or Halachah being ritual law with no ethical content,

read the 19th chapter of Leviticus, the central chapter in the Holiness Code, "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy; ye shall fear everyman his mother and his father, and ye shall keep My Sabbaths." Then come verses pertaining to sacrifices, and abstention from mixing diverse kinds of animals, plant life or garments. These ritual matters are put side by side with ethical precepts like "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"; "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart"; "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor nor favor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor."

The codes of the Torah-Halachah were part of a plan to develop a utopian Torah society upon earth, an ideal society. The authority by which the priest dispensed his Halachah or Torah, and the sanction upon which he demanded obedience, was its divine character. It rested on the phrase: "And the Lord spoke to Moses saying." The society that Torah seeks to establish is called theocracy—a society ruled by divine Authority.

The second part of the Bible is *Nevi-im*, the Prophets. Occasionally prophecy and priesthood resided in the same person. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, for instance, were each both priest and prophet. Moses, *Adon Han'vi-im*, Master of all Prophets, was also the first priest, for it was Moses who officiated at the dedication of the Tabernacle and ordained his older brother Aaron as a priest. In early times the two functions were probably indistinguishable. With development of society and religious specializations came also a religious differentiation.

The change came about also because of the corruption of the priesthood. As the hereditary priesthood became entrenched, it became primarily interested in the lucrative presents from rich worshippers who brought expensive sacrifices. As the book of Samuel makes abundantly clear about

Eli's sons, the priestly caste were over-concerned with the rewards and emoluments coming from the sacrifices. As the priesthood degenerated, the priests forsook their holy tasks. It was then that God sent the prophets to storm against religious corruption in the Temple and social corruption in the cities and on the farms. The prophets denounced the priesthood and the sacrifices upon which their whole caste rested, and urged the people to be as concerned with repentance, forgiveness, and obedience to God's Torah as with bringing an expensive sacrifice to the Altar.

In attacking the sacrifices, the prophets were attacking the source of income for the priests, their economic power, and also their religious sanction. They were saying that forgiveness could come by direct appeal to God or by righteous living, and not merely by ritual intermediaries or ceremonies. The priests were attacked because they showed more concern with their fat income and their entrenched socio-religious position, than with the spiritual welfare of their people.

Now, let us be clear; the prophets' attack upon the priesthood was *not* an attack upon the Torah, as it is sometimes mistakenly interpreted. As we have already made clear, the Torah taught ethical righteousness and religious holiness, love of neighbor and love of God. There was a conflict between priest and prophet, but *not* between Torah and Prophecy. The prophets denounced *empty* ritual, *false* priests, *insincere* sacrifices, not *all* ritual, priests, and sacrifices. They called upon the people to return to God, to *Toras Mosheh* in *all* its aspects. "Remember the Torah of Moses, my servant!" cried Malachai,⁷⁹ as did Isaiah⁸⁰ and Jeremiah.⁸¹

As you can understand, there is no contradiction between Torah and Prophecy, or between Halachah and Prophecy. Prophecy came to strengthen Torah—all of it. There may be two separate parts in the Bible, but both teach the same truth—to serve God and obey his commandments.

Achad Haam made it clear in his essay, "Priest and Prophet," that conflict between the two was one of temperament and degree, not of principle or basic belief. The prophet was an impatient promulgator of perfect righteousness—a perfectionist. The priest accepted the goals and ideals of prophecy and applied them to societal living and at a social pace. The priest toned down the prophetic demands and adapted them to the needs of the average people. From our analysis of the social ideals of the Torah, the codes taught by the priest, we can see that Achad Haam is correct.

The third section of the Bible, called *Kesuvim*, Writings, contains a variety of literature. Most of this literature can be identified as Wisdom literature taught by *Chachamim*, Wise Men, as Torah was taught by priests, and Prophecy by the prophets.

The gift of wisdom is also a divine gift, the handmaiden to God at the time of Creation.⁸² This holy spirit of wisdom rested upon chosen men and came to them through a special kind of revelation.⁸³ Those who follow the call of wisdom are blessed, for it shows them how to live happily.

But, Ecclesiastes concludes, after searching all wisdom and what it has to offer, "The end of the matter, all having been heard: fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole of man."⁸⁴ Is not the largest chapter in the whole Bible found in the 119th Psalm, in the *Kesuvim* or third section, and is it not *the* greatest poem to the glory of the Torah?

In telling you something about the Bible, I wanted to show how basic Halachah or Torah is to Biblical literature, and the "*Chukim U'Mish-patim*," the "ordinances and statutes," to Judaism. The three divisions in the Bible are bound together by a central unity which Professor Margolis called "The higher unity of the Torah." Bialik is correct in pointing out that there is Aggadah in the Halachah, and Halachah

in the Aggadah. The Torah is fundamentally codes; but these codes include moral principles and social behavior, ideals which prophecy fought for and helped to establish. In Rabbinical Judaism, when the Bible was organized and canonized, the Rabbis taught that the Torah is the holiest part of the Bible, then come the Prophetic sections, and then the writings. According to the Shulchan Aruch, when you put different books of the Bible on the table, a book of the Prophets must not rest on top of any of the Five Books of Moses, because these are the *holiest* and therefore the most important.

Normative Judaism thus decrees Halachah to be *more* important than Aggadah, and the Torah or Halachah the holiest of all three parts of the Bible. The Halachah, moreover, is not dried-up, petrified legalism, but contains the loftiest expressions of ethical religion and high devotion to God. Prophecy did not oppose Torah although true prophet opposed false priest, and as with Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, prophet and priest could be the same man. The Writings, like Prophecy, include and defend Torah-Halachah.

At the Parting of the Ways

Let us now discuss some background material on the "closing" of the Bible. The period in which the Bible was officially canonized—about 200–100 B.C.E.—was a time of great confusion and religious ferment. During this period other great religious books were being written, which we now call the *Apocrypha* and the *Pseudepigrapha*.

Apocrypha means "hidden." We know from the Talmud: "That they wanted to hide (exclude) the Book of Ecclesiastes" because it expressed skeptical views;⁸⁵ and that "were it not for Chananyah ben Chezkiyah, the rabbis would have hidden (excluded) the Book of Ezekiel," because of contra-

dictions between Ezekiel and Leviticus.⁸⁶ They also wanted to exclude Koheleth because it expresses skeptical ideas about God, about virtue, about honesty and about truth. "They wanted to hide the Book of Koheleth and exclude it from the Tanach."⁸⁷

The Rabbis who performed this task of "hiding" or trying to "hide" certain religious books were the Pharisees. These guardians of Judaism determined that only certain books were *holy* and belonged in the Tanach, while others were *not* holy and so deserved to be excluded. The excluded books were still read and studied by trusted scholars, and many of their ideas found their way into the *Midrashim* and general rabbinic thought. One finds it difficult to understand why some Apocryphal books like Maccabees I & II, Ben Sira, and Judith were excluded. They seem to express views and ideas acceptable to Judaism; yet the Rabbis felt, for reasons unknown to us, that they should be excluded.

The other group of books is called the *Pseudepigrapha* because the author in each case kept his own name hidden and ascribed the authorship to some famous personality of the past, whose name he used as a pseudonym. This was to give the book the authority of a great name, and to imply that it had been written many centuries ago and deserved the same veneration as other ancient works. In explaining the exclusion of these books from the official Bible canon, the Pharisee teachers said: "When Chaggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died, the holy spirit left Israel"⁸⁸—in other words, there was no longer any Prophecy after these. The Pharisees did make use of an occasional Bas-Kol (Echo) from heaven through which the will of God was still being made known to man. But they wanted to end prophecy. They were saying, "These new books are not holy; they were not written long ago; they are not in the spirit of true prophecy. Therefore, keep them hidden." The Rabbis taught: "After the

destruction of the Temple, even though prophecy was taken from the prophets, it was not taken from the rabbis." Some one said: "A rabbi is better than a prophet."⁸⁹ They were, of course, giving themselves authority and taking it away from another group who pretended to wear the mantle of prophecy.

Who were these pretenders? And why did the Pharisee teachers seek to end prophecy? A familiarity with the books of the Pseudepigrapha makes all this clear. The men who pretended to be prophets were the various authors of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. They may have honestly believed that the spirit of God rested on them. Especially the writers of Apocalyptic literature (describing "end" of the world) seem convinced of their divine inspiration.

But these books, especially the Apocalyptic, were dangerous and foreign to Judaism. They contained ideas incipient to Christianity, of the same milieu and the religious and intellectual sub-soil from which Christian ideas came forth. One should read the *Book of Enoch* or the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, or the *Apocalypse of Moses* to inhale the aroma of these ideas. The books are filled with strong chiliastic anti-social overtones; the eschatological "waiting for the end" is upon the authors; they feel the Messiah coming, and the author of the *Book of Enoch* actually calls him the "God-Man."

All these writers and preachers living in this seething time, awaiting the end of the world, spoke with authority and insisted that they were in the tradition of prophecy. What one hears today about the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Essenes, and "Men of Light opposing the Men of Darkness," and the Covenanters, helps one to appreciate how restless and spiritually wild this world was. These men also dreamed of the end of nations, of family life, of all human problems.

Such writings and preachings undermined the stability of

the Jewish people and their respect for Torah. Obviously, in a world that was coming to an end, there was no need for a Torah, for laws governing a wholesome, orderly society under God.

The Pharisees were the spiritual giants of their day. They saw these extremes and excesses; they saw the danger to the Jewish people and to all human society in these communistic colonies, and celibate, monastic communities. These authors of the Pseudepigrapha were undermining the whole structure of Judaism—its law, its orderly regulation of life, its urbane rationalism, its quiet, honest, piety. In its place they offered a “world coming to an end”; a rebirth and new spiritual existence; a “God-man” to lead mankind to an other-worldly salvation.

And so the Pharisees declared: “These men are not prophets. They do not speak in the name of God, and have no authority. Only in the Torah, only in books of the Bible, do you find the word of God. Hide these apochryphal books—they are dangerous!”

The apochryphal authors tried to evade these charges. So they gave pseudo-names to their books. *Enoch*, one of them said, wrote this book, and Enoch lived before Noah, so you can’t say that prophecy was ended then. God talked to Enoch, to Noah, to Abraham—prophecy was in full bloom then. But the Pharisees won out, and these books were all suppressed. Nevertheless, they had their effect: they did the groundwork for Christianity. But they did not seriously affect Judaism. They were hidden, and we know them today largely through Christian translations and not through Jewish tradition.

The Codes

In this seething spiritual caldron of Palestine, the Pharisee teachers went about teaching the people the Torah—the full Torah, of course, but emphasizing the *Halachah*, the laws

and codes. The great teacher Hillel became the founder of a whole school of rabbinic thought in opposition to the "House of Shammai." Halachik codes in the making during this period were written down before the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70. The *Mishnos* of *Megillas Taanis*, *Yoma*, *Tamid*, and *Middos* date from this period. Several divisions of the Halachah were codified at this time. The work of the Tannaim, Yochanan ben Zakkai, Akiva ben Joseph, and Yehudah Ha-Nassi, all led to the ultimate compilation of the *Mishnah*, the Second Canon, about the year 200.

From Hillel to Yehudah Ha-Nassi, from 25 B.C.E. to 190 C.E., five generations of *Tannaim* created and fashioned our Halachah and Aggadah. There were many divisions of opinions among them, and there could have been chaos. It was Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nassi, called just *Rabbee* in the Mishnah, who, using earlier collections and *Megillos Sesorim* (Secret Editions) and especially the work of Rabbi Akiva, edited the best of Halachah material in systematic presentation. The entire work is divided into six principal *Sedarim* (Orders); these are subdivided into *Massechtos* (Treatises); these again subdivided into *Perakim* (Chapters), and the chapters into *Mishnayos* (Paragraphs). These were the sources for the normative *Halachah*. Other points of view were known, but were not authoritative or normative. In due time, Rabbi Chiyah, a disciple of Rabbi Yehudah, collected these less authoritative opinions in a work called *Beraisos*.

After the close of the Tannaitic period, a new period in Jewish history began, the period of *Amoraim*. There were rabbis and teachers in Babylonia (Parthia) and Palestine, who continued the tradition of the Pharisee Tannaim and continued to study the word of God in the Torah. These men created the *Gemora*. The Mishnah plus the Gemora equals the Talmud.

It is significant that the periods are identified for us by

these architects of Halachah. The period after the Amoraim, 200–400 C.E. is called the period of *Savoraim*. Then comes the period of *Gaonim*, 500–850 C.E., when the great Gaonic codes were written. Judaism during these periods gave birth to a variety of codes which organized and established the fundamentals in Jewish religious life.

In the Middle Ages we come to the giant rabbinic thinker and author of the mightiest code of all, Maimonides, who called his work, *Yad Hachazaka*, “The Mighty Arm,” or *Mishneh Torah*, “Review of Torah.” The Rambam’s code, unlike those of his predecessors, covers the *entire* field of Halachah, including the laws not applicable after the destruction of the Temple. The *Mishneh Torah* of the Rambam therefore covers a larger area than does the Mishnah of Rabbi Yehudah. The Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah* is a scientific masterpiece, presented in a systematic form, the work of a mind at home in Greek logic and philosophy as well as rabbinic dialectics.

The Rambam wrote his work in a lucid Hebrew style. Soon rabbis began to write commentaries on the Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah*. They in turn wrote new codes on sections of the law that were applicable to their time. The great code which received acceptance and which has been the textbook for the training of Orthodox rabbis throughout the world for the last four hundred years is the *Shulchan Aruch*, “The Set Table,” by Rabbi Joseph Karo, the 16th century Palestinian Rabbi, and the additional *Mappah* (“Tablecloth”) comments on the same page by Rabbi Moses Isserles, the 16th century Polish Rabbi.

From the time of the Gaonim to our own day, there has continued a Rabbinic literature called *Sh’e-elos U’teshuvos*, “*Responsa*.” If a problem arose for which a rabbi could not find a clear-cut statement in the existing codes, or if he was in doubt how to decide a matter according to the tradition

of the Talmud, he addressed a question to a recognized scholar who studied the problem and used related materials in the Talmud or codes to decide the answer. This vast Responsa literature covers a period of a thousand years and includes every country where Jews have lived. It is another segment of Halachah.

In Biblical Judaism, Talmudic Judaism, and post-Talmudic Judaism, we see how the essential character of Judaism rests upon Halachah, and the various codes in Biblical and post-Biblical Times. To deny these basic facts is to distort Judaism.

Halachah Links Man to God

Why did Judaism develop such an attachment to Halachah? Why is the Halachah *the* method and technique in Judaism?

Reading the Bible carefully, especially the Torah but also the books of the Prophets, one is overwhelmed with the feeling that Revelation is a two-way highway—the message of God to man, and the need of man to do something for God. God is not indifferent to man and man cannot remain indifferent to God. The act of Revelation indicates that God is concerned about man, how he lives, what he does, his moral behavior, even his thoughts, and his intentions (“Thou shalt not covet”).

Accepting Revelation and its corollary, that God is concerned about man, we see how Judaism expresses this attitude in the *mitzvah*, a command. It is God talking to man saying, “Thou shalt” or “Thou shalt not,” and it is man responding, “I will do” or “I will not do.”

This two-way communication is symbolized in the Covenant that God made with Abraham, with Moses, with Joshua and with the whole people of Israel, and later renewed with

Josiah and Ezra. The *Bris Milah*, circumcision, is the ritual emphasizing this covenant. God makes the covenant with Abraham "to be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee . . . as for thee thou shalt keep My covenant, thou and thy seed after thee throughout their generations, every male among you shall be circumcised." ⁹⁰

The *Aron Kodesh*, the Holy Ark carrying the Ten Commandments, a very important code, is called the "Ark of the Covenant" of God. The covenant concept, a legal concept, is a contract between two parties, and it runs through the whole Bible.

The God of the Covenant expects Israel "to keep for thy good the commandments of the Lord and His statutes." ⁹¹ Those commandments and statutes, as we have said, include every aspect of life of man. Being a partner with God and bound to Him by the Covenant implies a readiness to serve Him always.

So long as Judaism retains the fundamentals of its historic character or any relationship with its past, the religion of the Jew will always express itself through Halachah. Individuals may demand that Judaism emphasize its ethical quality. Mystics may demand that Judaism emphasize the personal commitment. Nationalists may say that the Halachah merely served as a shell to preserve the people until they returned to Eretz Yisroel and now they may discard it. The latest vogue may demand that Judaism take cognizance of man's existentialism, or his mental health. All these ideas still must find their expression through the Halachah. Let us never forget, beyond all else and subsuming all else, that *Judaism is a religion*, an instrument for man to express his relationship to God, to fellow man and to himself. The Halachah is the code to govern this relationship.

Theories about Halachah

In the previous chapter, in which we saw that Halachah is basic to Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism, the answer to the question, "Can there be Judaism without Halachah?" should be obvious. We find, however, that other thinkers have other answers. We shall now consider these, and analyze them for any validity.

The various theories about Halachah indirectly suggest the answer to our question, "Can there be a Judaism without Halachah?" Philosophies saying there is no Halachah for today imply that Judaism can survive without it. Philosophies saying there is an Halachah for today imply that Judaism needs it to survive. These differing opinions may be classified under (1) Reform, (2) Reconstructionist, (3) Achad Haam's (4) Historical, (5) American, and (6) The New View.

Pauline Position

But first I want to present to you the views of a leading thinker of ancient times who opposed Halachah—Saul of Tarsus, known as Paul, the Apostle to the heathen. Obviously Paul believed that Halachah is essential to Judaism, and since he opposed Judaism as a religion he was also against its Halachah. He opposed the Halachah as the quality in Judaism which contradicted the religion in which he believed. According to Paul, law must be abolished because it is law that arouses men to sin. Without the law, he argued, man would not be disobedient or sinful. "If it had not been for the law, I should never have learned what sin was; I should not have known what it was to covet if the Law had not said, You must not covet. That command gave sin an opening and it led me to all sorts of covetous ways, for sin is lifeless without law." ⁹²

Paul taught the doctrine of original sin—that the human being is inherently evil, and can do no good, for everything that man does is filled with selfish desire and personal glory. There could be no law or mitzvah or any act performed by man that is altruistic, holy, or charitable. Paul wanted to abolish all law. If a man believed in Paul's god, he rose above the law and was freed from it. "But now the law no longer applies to us; we have died to what once controlled us. So that we can now serve in the new spirit, not under the old letter."⁹³

The person with a new faith needs no law; his faith keeps him from sin. "For the life-giving law of the Spirit . . . has freed you from the Law of sin and death."⁹⁴ Paul displayed a strong anti-nomian, anti-legal, attitude. He opposed the conviction that good laws and good deeds express the inner spiritual goodness of man; or that ritual purity and pious acts can serve man as a means of worshipping God.

This is the Pauline view. It is against Halachah, but takes it for granted that Halachah and Judaism are inseparable.

The Classic Reform Position

The Classic Reform Position took over Paul's disdainful attitude toward Halachah. It opposed any "religion of laws," seeing in Halachah an imprisonment of the free prophetic spirit, a damper on man's inner freedom. In the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, Reform said . . . "today we accept as binding only . . . moral laws, maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization. We hold all such Mosaic laws and rabbinic laws which regulate diet . . . entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state." A former president of the Reform Cen-

tral Conference of American Rabbis, the late Dr. Barnet Brickner, recently wrote: "Unlike traditional Judaism, Reform stressed theology more than Halachah . . . I am of the opinion that Judaism will have to shift emphasis from a religious way of life based on Halachah to one inspired by *Emunah* (faith)." ⁹⁵ Rabbi Brickner's call was made necessary because of some recent rumblings about a ritual guide for Reform Jews. This leader made it clear that Reform is not going to return to Halachah.

Today, as always, Reform keenly recognizes the Christian critique of Judaism as "overly-ritualistic and legalistic." Kaufman Kohler, the recent influential exponent of Reform theology in America, believed that legalism or Halachah is responsible for "stifling the ethical and spiritual elements in Judaism." ⁹⁶ Reform in attacking Halachah as legalism followed Pauline doctrine and general Christian theological disputation in considering Ezra and the Pharisees as "narrow" and "nationalistic." Since Reform opposed Jewish nationalism, it opposed circumcision and the dietary laws, practices which set the Jews apart.

With the renewed spirit of national pride amongst our people, we now find some segments of Reform more hospitable to Halachah than before, but there is no *religious* basis for its acceptance. Since the Halachah is not binding on Reform Jews and they see no theological reason for its authority, we find the attempts of an "old-timer" like Dr. Freehof in his little book, *Reform Jewish Practice and Its Rabbinic Background*, grotesque, to say the least. The book omits altogether from consideration the Reform abolition of dietary laws, the disregard for Talis and Tfilin, and neglect of the Sabbath. These and similar developments are deplored in the introduction of the book and are dismissed because of the irresistible influence of popular sentiment.

The author conveniently overlooks the conscious defiance of the Halachah in such practices as lighting the Sabbath candles after dark in the Reform Temple, as part of the Friday Night Service. The author makes a facetious attempt to defend many Reform practices in the Reform Temple when everybody knows that Reform Judaism does not consider the Halachah in the Bible or in the Talmud as authoritative. Each rabbi and congregation decide each issue as it arises in accordance with local need, convenience, and sentiment.

You cannot correct a Reform rabbi or congregation by saying: "This is against Halachah." There is no Halachah for Reform. There is "freedom"—everyone is free to do as he pleases. At best, Halachah serves those few Reform rabbis who are acquainted with it, as an "*etzah tovah*," a good piece of advice. You accept it when it supports your view and reject it when it opposes your view. Rabbi Abraham J. Klausner, editor of the *C.C.A.R. Journal*, wonders why the mitzvah of *milah* should be performed on the eighth day of the infant's birth . . . "Does this imply that the eighth day is preferable, the ninth less, and the tenth still less? Or does it mean that a Reform Jew *must* circumcise his child on the eighth day?"⁹⁷ Of course Rabbi Klausner knows what the Bible says, but he still does not know what the obligation of a Reform Jew is.

As you can see, Reform blows hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Today it returns to normative Judaism, in the next decade it will turn away. Reform reflects the needs of the non-religious mass of Jews and caters to them. It may be serving a useful function in holding these Jews, who would otherwise drift away entirely from Judaism, to some tenuous loyalty. But surely this pattern, which is a negative one, cannot be the program and answer for the future of Authentic Jews.

Reconstructionist Position

To tradition, Halachah is a *Din* (Law) or a *Mitzvah* (Command). To Reconstructionism, Halachah is a *Minhag*—a custom, a folkway. Halachah can have no theological foundation, being purely a sociological phenomenon. Just as the Elks, Moose, Masons, Knight Templars have customs and ceremonies, so do the Jewish People have “customs and ceremonies.”

The term folkway has romantic “overtones.” You conjure up an idyllic picture when all Jews in the peaceful *shtetel* lived quietly and happily, away from the confusion of the 20th century. The “folk people” had their own way of life and lived with Shabbos, cholent, Pesach, and kneidlach. Think of a pleasant painting by Chagall where everybody is angelically flying about, “out of this world.” This “folk-way” approach has an appeal for all the Jewish sentimentalists—the people who eat kneidlach on Pesach with their ham sandwiches, or the loyal sons who at *Yahrzeit* eat a Kosher meal at Poliakoff’s because they are sentimental that day.

The “folkway” approach is also scientific. You are told, according to anthropology and sociology, that it is permissible to eat Kosher as a “folkway” of your people. You’re not “old-fashioned” if you wear a Talis, because anthropologists have shown that it is proper for a people to continue in the way of its fathers for many centuries in a new “setting” or environment.

Nevertheless, in spite of the romantic overtones and the scientific *hechsher* of the Reconstructionist approach, “folkways” can hardly be an adequate concept for Jewish law in our life. Whatever its element of truth in describing Jewish behavior—and there is a “folk” aspect to many of our mitzvot—nevertheless, this concept does not do justice to the full experience of the mitzvah.

First, does it offer adequate motivation in the present? It lacks the moral quality and religious fervor which alone can arouse people to feel obligation and consecration in doing a mitzvah. Why should we strive with all our power to perform a folkway? Can a nostalgic reverence for the *Babeh's lichtbenchen* claim our allegiance, so that we go out of our way, drop everything, and at the cost of personal discomfort, perform the task of lighting the candles? Nor can this state of mind achieve more than treasuring the Talis and Tfilin as museum pieces, or as works of art, as in "The Rabbi of Vitebsk" by Marc Chagall. This is a far cry from getting up early every morning and donning those same Talis and Tfilin and praying to God.

Secondly, does it offer a valid interpretation of the past? If we apply the Reconstructionist view to our historic past, to the way our great-grandparents lived, we can not but repudiate it with absolute finality. For how does it do justice to the piety, to the sacrifice, to the determination of our immediate ancestors in living according to their religion? Did our grandparents persevere through privation, poverty, and exclusion from Christian European society only to maintain a folkway, only to be loyal to a tribal custom, only to be clannish about a family ceremony?

The truth of the matter is that the motivation behind Jewish piety was neither sheer stubbornness nor primitive clannishness, but high religious belief in religious *truth*. Behind Jewish loyalty was the deep religious conviction in the truth of Israel's heritage, and a common sense preference of eternal reward for temporary bliss. Surely, the Reconstructionist view, that Jewish laws are folkways is totally inadequate to interpret and account for the historic role Jewish law played in the past.

Thirdly, does it offer eternal values for the future? If the Reconstructionist view does not do justice to the high moral

quality in the observance of the law, if it cannot account for the historic role of the law, how can it be a program of action or faith for the present generation? The ideal of clinging to folkways, regardless of their intrinsic charm and beauty, could only appeal to a transitional generation, to those who saw it in their father's house, and have retained some sentiment of group survival but lost conviction and purpose. For the American-born generation something more significant than folkways is necessary if Judaism is to have meaning for the Authentic Jew.

Achad Haam's Position

Achad Haam's conception of Halachah, which is also erroneous and unacceptable, was that its whole structure was built to preserve the people of Israel in *Galus*—an “exilic garment.” Just as an individual embodies a “will to live” so does a whole people will to live. The Jewish national psyche therefore created the whole superstructure of Halachah subconsciously, to protect itself. It gave religious excuses about a divine law from Sinai; but this was only a front, a respectable religious facade for the real thing underneath, the “will to live” as a people. “Why did Halachah set up so many stringent laws in separating Jew from gentile?” To preserve the identity of the people and keep their “will” strong. From this standpoint it follows that Jewish law is indispensable in the Diaspora, where there is the danger of assimilation, but not in Israel.

Many a rabbi has followed this line of reasoning and defended Halachah as representing the “Jewish Way of Life.” Let us analyze this: does it offer a valid interpretation of the past, adequate motivation of the present, or eternal values for the future? On all these points, it fails.

Despite the element of truth in Achad Haam's view that

the law preserved the people, the fundamental fact remains that Jewish life through the centuries derived its strength from its religious convictions, that survival of the Jewish nationality was a *result* of religion rather than a *cause*. Down through the centuries the Jewish people were willing to compromise on national values, to surrender their land, their language, to change their names, their dress. But they were immovable as the Rock of Gibraltar when a law of their religion was affected. Where matters of faith were concerned, even minor matters were considered essential.⁹⁸

Does the sheer "will to survive" offer any program for the present? Does the mere biological survival of the Jewish group *qua* group justify anything? Obviously not. Should we obey Jewish law solely because it assures the biological survival of Jews? Survival for what? To be what *kind* of a group? Obviously this view offers no motivation for the present.

What of the future? Can the "will to live," the nationalist motive, be sufficient as a foundation of Jewish law in Israel? This doctrine says nothing, because every law by any party will always claim it helps the progress of the State and assures Israel of survival. If survival be the only key to the Halachah, one might say that since Israel is in existence, and assures us of the survival of Jews in the world, American Jews no longer have the obligation to survive as Jews and hence can dispense with the Halachah that sets them apart. This point of view was actually suggested by Arthur Koestler and others.

Historical School

Another view of Halachah is the conception offered by the "Historical School," begun by Zechariah Frankel in Europe a hundred years ago and developed by Solomon Schechter in America in our own century as Conservative Judaism. To this school of thought, Halachah is a developing process that

reflects the genius of the people, a slow gestation that comes from their needs. The inner psyche of the people, over a long period of time, is expressed in its laws. Therefore, these laws must not be suddenly disturbed or changed; let them move in their own grooves according to the needs of the people's souls. The great emphasis, as in the Achad Haam theory, is on the work of the nation, the people. The concept of *Klal Yisroel*, "Catholic Israel," as Schechter called it, is here basic to Halachah. God and Revelation are not the important factors.

Schechter's view arose to stop the Reformers who changed everything as they pleased. By putting the authority in *Klal Yisroel*, Schechter hoped to retain Halachah and make it the basis for Judaism; he pointed out that once a practice was widely accepted by the people no authority could change it. In Schechter, at least, we see the need for an Halachah and a method by which he tried to save it.

But we must point to some theoretical caveats. The Schechter approach is pragmatic: it says "what is—is good." If the Jews have lived by the Halachah a thousand years, then they must continue to live by the Halachah. This is the will of *Klal Yisroel*. By the same token, if Jews in America are Sabbath desecrators, then the Halachah should change with the people, with *Klal Yisroel*. This market-research approach reflects the genius of American-Jewish business community, in which the majority not only rules but is "right."

The Schechter view of Halachah is truly "conservative" when the majority of *Klal Yisroel* live according to it, and we can say to the minority of assimilated Reformers: "You can't change—the will of *Klal Yisroel* is against change." But when the majority of *Klal Yisroel* in America, at least in practice, do not live with the Shabbos, and we say that *Klal Yisroel* has changed the Halachah about Shabbos, what are we conserving or preserving? *"To pretend that the present chaos in Jew-*

*ish religious life is the American Way and to justify it by some high-sounding name, or to acquiesce in it and accept it, constitutes sheer self-deception, and would make a mockery of our religion.”*⁹⁹

This would be the Gallup Poll approach to Judaism. How many eat Kosher? 40%. How many eat *trefah*? 60%. Therefore, it is proper to eat non-Kosher. How many observe the Sabbath? 5%. How many do not observe the Sabbath? 95%. It is therefore desirable in Judaism not to observe the Sabbath. We can do this all down the line, calling the majority beliefs and practices normative. This is the height of vulgarity, the abdication of reason and culture.

Does the Schechter view offer a valid interpretation of the past? To some extent. Does it offer an adequate motivation of the present? It can't: *Klal Yisroel* today are the very sinners who need the motivation to change themselves. Does it offer a program for the future? No: can sinners be guided by their own sinfulness?

The American Position

Now we come to a layman's view, the practical approach to *Halachah*. Here you don't get involved in theory and philosophy, but keep your eye on the bank account. You want to run a community U.J.A. dinner in Philadelphia. You ask what is the cost per plate for a *trefah* dinner? \$3.00. What is the cost per plate for a Kosher dinner? \$5.00. How many guests do you expect? 1000. All right, you can save \$2000 by serving a *trefah* dinner. The rabbi or an interested Jew calls the Executive Director and asks, "Why are you serving a *trefah* dinner? The British Ambassador in Washington served Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie and all the Christian and Jewish guests at the British Embassy a Kosher dinner—why can't we do the same thing for our Jews?" And the director

answers: "Don't talk to me about the British Ambassador and Jewish self-respect. I talk dollars and cents. I want to save our community \$2000." In some cities in the mid-west, a really conscientious executive director who is a Zionist will tell you: "Do you want Israel to get \$2000 less just so we should eat Kosher dinners?"

The practical approach shrugs off all theories of Judaism or philosophies of Halachah. A clever layman will say: "When it comes to Judaism, you're right, Rabbi. You're the authority on Judaism. But when we discuss practical matters like fundraising, or U.J.A. dinners, or keeping the Jewish Community Campsite open on the Sabbath, we're not talking about Judaism."

This "practical" approach to matters of the spirit, religion, and culture is the most destructive and the most threatening attitude toward Halachah. This attitude ignores Halachah, says Halachah is for books but not for life, not for the Jewish community, not for the individual.

To be practical in practical matters is wonderful. In the operation of business, practicality helps to achieve solvency. But to be practical in spiritual or cultural matters means to reduce the level of the spirit, of culture, of religion, to the least common denominator. To be practical in things of the mind or soul means to cheapen our standards of refinement and reduce them to the level of vulgarity. To be practical in art, music, and religion means to ignore the high standard of the few and cater to the vulgar standards of the many. To be practical means we don't assume the difficult task of education and raising the people, their standards, and their tastes to the higher level of specialized, cultivated opinion. Instead, we give in to the lower standards, cater to their foolish whims, humor them, tell them they are always right, get down to their level. To be practical in spirit or culture means to "sell-out" to one's conscience.

Does practicality offer any valid interpretation of the past? We can all agree that our forefathers who lived the Jewish religious life and gave it to us as a heritage used the quality of practicality in their commercial affairs but not in their religious life. Does the practical approach offer any motivation for the present? Certainly *not*. Does it offer any eternal values for the future? Merely to put this question is to emphasize the absurdity of the position. Does a practical man care for eternal values? A practical man wants "real" values *now*, he wants cash in the bank *now*, not pie-in-the-sky values for the future. The obvious answer to our question is that the practical approach, because it is hostile to eternal values for the future, would destroy Halachah and Judaism.

The New View

If all these theories about Halachah are wanting, what theory shall we accept? To approach our answer let us consider a word with which we are all familiar—the word, "frum," an adjective that means "pious." We used to say, and some still say, "My father is really 'frum.'" We mean that father goes to *shul* every day, or *davens* every morning in Talis and Tfilin; he recites the day's designated Psalms; he fasts on all the fast days; he eats only Kosher food; he gives to charity regularly, you never hear a harsh word come from his lips, and he is kind to everybody—really "frum."

Or someone would say: "My mother is 'frum.'" We mean she recites her prayers daily and before and after every meal; runs the house meticulously Kosher; has *pushkehs*, charity boxes, and every Friday before *lichtbenchen*, drops her coins into every box; she helps everybody, runs to look after the sick or the needy, is always making a collection for somebody or some cause. She's busy from morning to night, always doing something useful. She is really "frum."

Now, stop and analyze the "frum" person. "Frumkeit" to such a person is a discipline; it means following "Thou shalt," which is right behavior, and avoiding "Thou shalt nots," wrong behavior. The "frum" person follows this discipline regularly and effortlessly. The law *must* be obeyed. The feeling of doing the right thing is so overpowering and so satisfying that there is a real emotional pleasure in being "frum," in doing the good. With the many years of upbringing and constant observant living, the "frum" person follows almost a habitual pattern so that it is in a way easy for him to be "frum."

"Frumkeit" or piety, with all these emotional pleasures of following *discipline*, possessing a feeling for the right thing, living regularly and habitually, rests upon this belief: "I am doing this for God and for my fellow man." The "frum" person has the blessed thing called faith—he believes with all his heart and soul that in following the discipline, he is obeying God's commandments and is making this world a better place.

With an understanding of the "frum" person, let us examine another topic as we approach our answer on what should be our belief about Halachah and what should motivate our observance. There is much talk about a religious revival: new temples, increased membership, maybe better attendance at services, increased enrollment in religious schools, and more expensive Bar-Mitzvahs. I have already written of my evaluation of the evidence presented to support the contention that there is a religious revival. But one way of verifying whether there is truly a religious revival in American Jewry is to ask: Are American Jews becoming "frum?" If not, then there is no religious revival going on. If people can show me individuals who attend services every Friday night, then I'll say, "That person is 'Frum'—*Er loift in Temple yeden Freitag zu-nachts.*"

Any valid attitude about Halachah must be able to make people "frum." Our theory of Halachah must be able to generate in us the same feeling that the Halachah set off in our forefathers. We must develop an approach toward Halachah which will open up in us wells of piety and religious feeling. Otherwise, our religion is not real religion—we are merely going through the motions. No conception of Halachah can be worthy of our loyalty unless it can capture some of the motivations which actually functioned in the past.

To help us discover "frumkeit," I suggest that the relationship of the Jew to God be the basis of all Halachah. "What does the Lord require of me?" is the basic question. *We must think of the centrality of God.* We must recognize that Judaism as a religion purposely turns its attention upon God.

R. Joshua, son of Karcha, said: "Why does the paragraph of the *Sh'ma* precede the paragraph of *Ve-hoya im Sha-mo-a?*" To teach that one must first accept the yoke of God and then the Yoke of the commandments."¹⁰⁰

First, the Jew accepts God as his Sovereign. "Hear O Israel, the Lord Our God, the Lord is One. Thou shalt love the Lord your God. . . ." Then he recites in the second paragraph, "And if you will carefully obey My commandments . . . ," the acceptance of the commandments follows after the acceptance of God.

Secondly: The Jew performs these commandments as methods of expressing his love of God. The Rambam calls his second section of his codes, "The Book of Love," wherein he presents the laws for the recital of the morning and evening *Sh'ma*, the laws of thrice daily prayer, the laws of *Tfilin*, *Mezuzah*, *Sefer Torah*, *Talis*, *Tzizis*, and blessings. The ideal of loving God is not an abstract ideal but has been concretized by Judaism into ways of performing mitzvos, ways of ex-

pressing "frumkeit"; of reciting blessings, wearing *Talis* and *Tfilin*, and praying thrice daily.

Thirdly, these mitzvos which we accept, we believe come from God, and were revealed to our forefathers. There was no doubt a human element in the revelation. "*Dibra Torah Kil'shon bnai Adam.*"¹⁰¹ "God speaks to men in the language of men." But we believe that it was the most perfect revelation, notwithstanding the human limitations that could have crept in.

Fourthly, our forefathers accepted them as divine when they said *Na-a-seh V'nishma*, when they agreed through the centuries to live by them as divinely revealed and inspired truth. The acceptance was not a passive one. "Every judge who performs an honest judgment becomes a partner to the Creator."¹⁰² In adhering to God's commandments they become partners in molding a tradition and way of life. But our forefathers took the living word of God and kept it a *Toras Chayim*, by application, interpretation and expansion of the Law. This was achieved through a confrontation between *Torah* and *Chayim*.

Fifthly, by living the life of *Halachah*, we shall achieve the highest ideals of religion—holiness and purification of the thoughts and motives of men. "The Mitzvos were given only to purify mankind."¹⁰³ Through this manner, living the life of Torah, we can help to establish the Kingdom of God.

Sixthly, the precepts and norms of Halachah constitute only the minimal standards for the individual or the community. The Chasid who sees the purpose rises above the law—*Lifnim mishuras Hadin*,¹⁰⁴ beyond the line of the Law.

Bringing all the six elements together, we get this concept of Halachah: a system of divinely revealed, divinely inspired, and collectively accepted laws making for the ennoblement of the individual and the elevation of social morality.

Critique of Our View

Subject this theory about Halachah to our former three questions: Does it offer a valid interpretation of the past? This theory began with the fundamental quality of the Halachic way of life—"frumkeit"—which was descriptive of the life of our religious people in the past. We can see that it does justice to the glorious fullness of Judaism in the past.

Does it offer adequate motivation for the present? I believe that American Jews who sincerely seek God and desire to live a life expressing this quest and their response to it, who seek self-ennoblement and the constant improvement of social morality, will find inspiration and reassurance in the norms of Halachah.

Does this conception of Halachah offer eternal values for the future? *Because this conception of Halachah is God centered, and seeks the constant ennoblement of man and the elevation of society, we have values that are eternal.* For as long as men live together as men under God, the Halachah will be essential; the Halachah will inspire men to live together in righteousness and will teach them how to express their love of God.

Change and Authority

We shall not answer the question, "How does law change and who has the authority to change it?" by general statements and broad evaluations. First we shall discuss a very important law of the Halachah, show its unfolding—not "evolutionary"—process, and see how the Halachah changed. Then we will consider who had the authority to change it. We are following this thesis: there are two poles, *Torah* and *Chayim* (Life): *Torah* was given for *Chayim*, to enhance *Chayim*; in the *Galus* (Exile) separation arose between *Torah* and *Chayim*; now in Eretz Yisroel and all over, it will be necessary to bring *Torah* and *Chayim* together.

The Sabbatical Year—Shmittah

The Shmittah year will illustrate how the rabbis through interpretation changed or expanded the Biblical law according to the needs of Life.

The Sabbatical year expresses itself in two laws: *Shmittas Karka*, the release of land, and *Shmittas Kesafim*, the release of money debts. The first law takes effect upon what is considered the land of Israel, the second requirement upon the person of the Jew (*Chiyuv Karka* and *Chiyuv Guf*). The Bible says that Shmittas Karka, Release of Land, means prohibiting the exercise of private ownership over the land;¹⁰⁵ and that Shmittas Kesafim, Release of Money-debts, means absolute nullification of all debts.¹⁰⁶

The Talmud¹⁰⁷ discusses the question: Where does the release of the land take effect? Should it take effect beyond the boundaries of Eretz Yisroel? That is, if a Jew owned land beyond the boundaries, was he required to observe the Sabbatical year on this land? The answer is no, only Eretz Yisroel land calls for release in the Seventh Year. (Lev. XXV—*Eretz*

moshvosai-chem). What is Eretz Yisroel? Only the land whose boundaries are defined in the Bible. Thus, land conquered by David and added to Eretz Yisroel is not included.¹⁰⁸ "Release of money-debts," on the other hand, is effective all over the world, in Eretz Yisroel and outside, anywhere a Jew may live. This is the Biblical law according to Talmudic interpretation.

In Tannaitic times, further clarifications and differing interpretations were recorded in the sources. Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, 170–217 C.E., argued that "release of land" was practiced in Eretz Yisroel so long as the Jubilee Year was in force.¹⁰⁹ But the Jubilee Year was in force only when all the tribes of Israel were settled on the land.¹¹⁰ Since now the Ten Tribes were not present, and members of the tribe of Judah (Jews) lived in other parts of the world, Jubilee is not in effect, and Sabbatical release of land is also not in effect. By this sweeping interpretation, Rabbi Yehudah the Prince, editor of the Mishnah, abolished the release of land as a Biblical requirement (*Mideoraisa*); it remained only as a rabbinic requirement (*Miderabanan*). Other Tannaim differed with Rabbi Judah the Prince, holding the opinion that the "release of land" is effective in Israel as a Biblical requirement.

Later medieval authorities followed this difference of opinion. Rashi and others said "release of land" was a Biblical requirement in Eretz Yisroel; Rambam and others held that "release of land" was only a Rabbinic requirement. In the development of law and passing of time, *Poskim* maintained with the Rambam that it was a Rabbinic requirement. The difference is important, for many reasons, as will appear later on.

What did Tannaitic logic do to "release of money" debts? The Bible states clearly that debts are nullified by the Sabbatical year.¹¹¹ ". . . every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his

neighbor and his brother; for the Lord's release hath been proclaimed."

According to the Tannaim, the words *he shall not exact* are basic. You must not *press* for the money. If the borrower leaves collateral, then the lender has his guarantee and he *need* not *press*: if the borrower does not pay, the lender merely keeps the collateral. Hence the "release of money" does not apply in this instance. The same reasoning applies also when the borrower offers a specific piece of property as a surety—*Achrayos* (*Kassav Achrayos Bishtar*). If the borrower doesn't pay, the lender takes the property. A third instance when the "release of money" debts cannot take effect in a Sabbatical year is when the note states a specific expiration date after the Sabbatical year. The lender does not begin to demand or press for payment until the time set in the note. Hence, during the Sabbatical year, the lender is *not* disobeying the prohibition "He shall not exact." He is not *pressing*. He is waiting until the time specified. A fourth instance would be when the lender deposits the note with the Court for the duration of the Sabbatical year. During this period of time, there is no desecration of *Lo Yigos*, "He shall not exact," for the lender does not have the note to press; it is in the court.

To top it all, Hillel made a *Takkanah* (ordinance) called "Pruzbul" which circumvented the whole principle of release of debts during the Sabbatical year. Medieval commentators were put out by this, for if the four instances just listed are correct in their reasoning, then Hillel's *Takkanah*, is almost unnecessary, for it applies only to an oral deal (no note) without date for collection and without guarantee nor surety. Only a fool borrows money under these circumstances, and only a bigger one lends. The medieval scholar-rabbis tried, however, to salvage the accomplishment of Hillel in this *Takkanah*, or "Pruzbul." Hillel's "Pruzbul" took the whole

"release law" out of force. When the lender went to court and deposited his note, he received another paper, which said, "I the lender will have the right to collect my debt from the borrower at any time that I desire."¹¹² The judges signed the paper, and the Sabbatical year could not affect that loan. For now, the *Court* "pressed" the borrower. Hillel instituted the "Pruzbul" because he saw lenders would not lend money to needy borrowers for fear of losing money during the "release-year." *Life* demanded the Takkanah, and a change through interpretation achieved the result. Hillel only followed the principle of "depositing the note with the court."

If one Jew borrows money from another, and they do not write a "Pruzbul," why doesn't the Sabbatical year revoke the debt, that is, for the pious Jews who live by the Torah? Why do not the religious Jews write a "Pruzbul" to protect their interests?

We said before that "release of the land" is limited to Eretz Yisroel, for Rabbi Yehudah the Prince and the Rambam considered it a Rabbinic requirement, though others considered it a Biblical requirement. However, the law of "release of money," applies to every Jew the world over. The *Rosh* (R. Asher b. R. Yehiel) when he came from Germany to Spain, raised this same question: Why don't the Jews in Spain write a "Pruzbul" like the Jews in Germany?¹¹³ The answer is that the three instances we mentioned—a loan with collateral; a loan with date for collection, which is the way we write notes today; and a note with a surety, offering property or some business as collateral—make it unnecessary to write a "Pruzbul." Therefore all Jews who borrow regularly are not disobeying the law in Deuteronomy XV. Hence we see why religious Jews who borrow and lend daily do not write a "Pruzbul": it is not necessary.

But this doesn't finish the picture. Let us get back to the "release of land law" in Israel, over which there is a division

of opinion, some saying the prohibition to till the land is only Rabbinic, and some saying it is Biblical.

What the Jews actually did during the time of the Second Commonwealth, we do not know. And the debate of which we speak was purely academic during the Middle Ages, when Jews did not own land in Eretz Yisroel. With the birth of Zionism and the return of Jews to Eretz Yisroel, the whole problem was reopened for the Jews who live according to the law.

The year 1889 was a Sabbatical year. There were a few religious Jews owning land in the Holy Land. What should they do? The Kovno Rav, Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spector, advised that the Jews should sell the land to the Arabs for two years on the condition that it be resold again to the original Jewish owners. During the Sabbatical year, the land in title belonged to Moslems; Jews who had no source of income might work as hired hands for the temporary Moslem owners. Obviously the Moslem owners were not required to obey the Torah.¹¹⁴ This arrangement is comparable to "sale of Chometz" to the rabbi, who acts as agent for the congregation and "resells the Chometz" to a Christian. During the week of Pesach, the Jew who has his *chometzdige* dishes and cereals packed away in the closet is not disobeying the Biblical prohibitions of "shall not be seen" and "shall not be found."¹¹⁵ The contents of the closet do not belong to the Jewish owner; they belong to the Christian to whom the rabbi sold the contents of many closets.

In 1910 the Chief Rabbi of Jaffa and later the first chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook, issued his *Heter* and responsum to permit the tilling of the land held by Jews during the Sabbatical year, provided it was sold to a non-Jew for the duration of the Sabbatical year.

Rav Kook followed the Rambam, who held that the Mitzvah of the "release of the land" is only Rabbinic. Because there is

no Jubilee year, therefore there is no Sabbatical year. Hence, the "release of land" is not a Biblical law; it is only a Rabbinic law. Rav Kook followed the accepted principle in Rabbinics as to the difference between a Biblical and a Rabbinical Law; if there is a doubt in a Biblical law, follow the more stringent approach; if there is a doubt in the Rabbinic law, follow the more lenient approach. Rav Kook held that in the case of rebuilding Eretz Yisroel, which is a great Mitzvah, if the Sabbatical year would be in force, it would affect the whole economy adversely and would discourage immigration into the land. Therefore, "a time of no alternative," "great loss of funds," and need of building Eretz Yisroel are all reasons to impose the *Safek Rabanan Lekula*, and therefore it is permissible to sell the land to a non-Jew.

The religious community in Israel, except for the *Kehilah Hacharadis* which never accepted Rav Kook's opinion, is guided by this decision, and the Ministry of Religions instituted this practice in 5715 (1955), which was a Sabbatical Year.

Change in Sabbath Laws in Israel

The Halachah will change with faster tempo now in Eretz Yisroel because of the demands of life. The greatest change will be in the area of what is permitted and prohibited on the Sabbath.

The observance of the Sabbath is the law of the land, and rests on the social principle that one cannot employ labor for more than six days a week. This excludes cooperatives, who are self-employables, and it also cannot interfere with private activities like smoking or cooking on the Sabbath, or doing homework, do-it-yourself things around the house: brick-laying, carpentry, and so on. Employer-employee activity, however, is prohibited on Shabbos by state law.

But who enforces the law? A special group of police, working in a special bureau called *Mo-atza Lemaan HaShabbat*. The police are all volunteers who get the cooperation of the regular police in enforcing the Sabbath law.

Excluded from the Sabbath law are glass, cement, rubber, and chemical factories, and iron foundries, because once the work is stopped in these activities, it takes days to start over again. Also excluded from the Sabbath law are the essential national services upon which rest the security of the State and society.

The Rabbinate has not prohibited these essential activities because they know that life demands their continuity. Orthodox Jews refuse to work on the Sabbath, and so they arrange their shifts to let non-observant Jews work in their place and act as the *Shabbos goy*. Obviously this solution is unsatisfactory; it is morally and religiously dishonest to permit another *Jew* to act as a *Shabbos goy*. Obviously, too, the Halachah has not begun to grapple with the needs of life in this particular area. The Torah is not a way of life to be lived in a monastery, or a program where everything prohibited is done by the *goy*. For a long while this was true, but only in Galus. And so one of the leading scholars of Orthodox Judaism in England, and Principal of Jews College in London, Rabbi Dr. Isadore Epstein, writes, "Ways and means will have to be discovered by the Rabbinate before long to meet this problem."¹¹⁶

How does Halachah change? From the given explanation, the answer is: it changes by interpretation.

There is a school of thought, the ultra-Orthodox, who would have to admit to the change in the Smittah law just cited, but would argue that no further changes may take place because no rabbi or rabbinate is equipped by learning and piety to interpret such changes. Another school of thought, the Classic Reformers, would say that Halachah in

the past may have changed by interpretation, but Reform rabbis in convocation have the authority to change by legislation. The Reform rabbinate will legislate a new Halachah or dissolve the old Halachah as no longer binding. Rabbi Robert Gordis, in *Judaism for the Modern Age*, suggests other methods of change: (1) Accretion, (Yizkor, Kaddish, burial customs, Simchas Torah); (2) Reduction of the importance of a law, (Shatnez-garment with wool and linen); (3) Change of circumstances, (no sacrifices after destruction of the Temple, and all Mitzvos that apply only to Eretz need not be observed outside of Eretz); (4) A kind of legislation—*Takannos* and *Gezairos*. “However,” writes Gordis, “the dominant characteristic method was that of interpretation, which proved generally adequate to the new conditions and new insights of each age.”¹¹⁷

In between the Ultra-Orthodox, who say the Halachah can no longer be changed, and the Classic Reformers, who say that the Halachah can be changed by legislation, is a wide group of thinkers who say the Halachah can be changed by interpretation. What has been happening all along in Jewish history will and must continue to make Halachah and life relevant to each other. In the center of this stream of thought is Rav Abraham Kook and his followers in Mizrahi-Hapoel-Hamizrachi, in the Halachah commission in the Rabbinical Council of America, and in the “right-wing” of Rabbinical Assembly of America.

Authority to Change

Now, let us direct our attention to the second half of our subject; “Who has the authority to change the Halachah?”

We could put it very simply and say the Rabbis change the Halachah by their interpretation. That seems to describe

what occurred with the Sabbatical year. Or we could be very sociological and profound and say that the people—*Klal Yisroel*, Catholic Israel—change the Halachah: as the life of the people changes, the Halachah moves with the people.

In a way, both answers are correct. People who live by the Torah, and want to obey God's commandments, ask *Sh'ailos*, bring their problems to their rabbis. The rabbis teach the people, live with them, and understand their needs. The rabbis see the changed conditions and the new needs, and to bring Torah and life together, they become inspired to interpret God's commandments in accordance with the ultimate spirit of the Torah and the needs of the pious Jews.

To achieve this harmonious blend, this give and take, between rabbi and the people, between Torah and life, certain axioms must be accepted:

First, there must be the basic faith in the people and the rabbis that the law, the Halachah, is broad enough and great enough to apply to any situation in life. When the people or the rabbis lose this faith, the law becomes static and frozen. The Ultra-Orthodox will say, "The law is perfect as it is and needs no re-interpretation." But *life* must adjust itself to the demands of Halachah. Without going into a debate over this position, what would happen to the economy of Israel if *Shmittah* were observed as the Bible requires it, without the Rabbinic interpretations in *Shmittas Kesafim* and *Shmittas Karka*?

If the people and the rabbis believe that the Halachah is flexible and viable, and that life must go on, it is not a question of which must give way for the other; both can be brought together. To harmonize Torah and life, it is not a question which is the form and which is the substance, and which must fit the other; rather, *both* are form and *both* are substance and *both* must marry and live together.

The rabbis must have the courage to interpret the laws according to this basic faith; the people must have patience and must trust their rabbis, their integrity and honesty.

Secondly, people who hope that the Halachah will be made viable, must continue to live by the Halachah and accept its authority. For if the people ignore the authority of the Halachah, they lose the *right* to change it. If people decide to live without the Halachah, they leave it to become a museum piece, or a preoccupation for antiquarian scholars. Then the Halachah ceases to live and becomes frozen in its rejected form.

It has been wisely asked about changing the Halachah: for whom shall it be changed? For those who throw it away? They don't want it even in a changed form, so why change it? For those who love it and live by it? They don't ask for any changes; they live with it as it is. What then can be accomplished by changes?

For those who want a viable Halachah, it is most essential that we recognize the authority of the Halachah and try to live by it. In time, these people, as Jews who respect Halachah, will make their influence felt and will impel rabbis to bring Torah and life together.

Those who exclude themselves from *Klal Yisroel* by non-observance are like the wicked son in the Hagaddah: "he has excluded himself from the *Klal*." ¹¹⁸ Because he has excluded himself from the community, he cannot share in its destiny and loses his right to redemption.

So too are those who seek not to accept the authority of the Torah. "That soul shall be cut-off from its people." ¹¹⁹ It seeks to deprive itself of any of the spiritual benefits nurtured by Halachah. As long as the Jew considers the Halachah authoritative in his life, there will exist the relationship of "give and take," of one being able to influence the other;

when there is a divorce between them, there is lost any hope of mutual influence and change.

The older Orthodox Rabbi in America was so shocked by the indifference of his people, by their contempt for the Halachah, by their disrespect and lack of understanding for the Halachah, that he feared to tamper with it. And this brings us to the *third axiom* about the Halachah.

Before people begin to talk about a change in the Halachah they must first taste the life of Halachah. Before an immigrant can begin to complain against what is wrong with the laws of the country, he must first accept its laws, become a citizen, pay taxes, live a number of years in the obedience of the laws—and thus earn the right to criticize and demand a change, or vote for legislators who will make the changes he wants. Many of us are too quick to criticize the laws of the Sabbath, or the laws of family purity in marriage, before we even begin to appreciate their value from actual experience.

With each additional year of experience as a rabbi and pastor of a flock, I find more evidence for the need of a traditional observance of the Sabbath. If we say that the observance of the Sabbath has relevance for the modern Jew, we mean that the Sabbath recreates his spirit and regenerates his physical and nervous system; we mean that his tired and tormented psyche will find time to replenish its lost energies and will find spiritual uplift and psychic strength in a day of prayer and peace. Before we begin asking questions why it is necessary to refrain from using the telephone, from cooking and washing, and other usual chores, let us *taste* and *feel* the reality of the Sabbath day by living such a day. Let us appreciate its significance *for our time* and *for our day*.

I believe that the Sabbath is a greater need today than it was a hundred years ago. A century ago, the Jews lived in slow going rural villages and *Shtetlach*, and even in the larger

centers the pace of life was peaceful and orderly. In our Aspirin Age, however, when we take "tranquilizers" and pills to soothe our restless nerves, the lack of Sabbath observance testifies all the more vividly to the burning need for the traditional Sabbath. In our Age of Anxiety, the need for the traditional Sabbath is so much the greater. With all our labor-saving devices, and increased automation, the hazards of modern life are found in mental disorder, nervous diseases, and hypertension such as high blood pressure, heart ailments, and stomach disorders.

What modern man needs most is not physical rest, but nervous and psychic relaxation. Considerations such as these should make us aware of the need of the Sabbath as a psychic spiritual aid. Although we are not ruling out the possibility of any changes in Sabbath law (as we pointed out in the beginning of this essay), we should rather first become aware of its usefulness and relevancy to our daily life. Let us taste the Sabbath, enjoy its aroma, before we begin to find fault with its many prohibitions and limitations.

Lastly, we ought to be aware of the kind and rate of changes we will demand. The Halachah is a majestic structure of Rabbinic interpretation and application resting on Divine Law. This great edifice of law was built slowly and carefully through the ages. To the observant Jew, the whole structure casts a spell of an accurate dove-tailing mosaic, a carefully put together colored window with the various hues and shades accurately blending. To permit inexperienced hands or unpius souls or ill-educated rabbis not acquainted with its highways and by-ways to tamper with the Halachah will result in changes that are artificial, fiercely distasteful, strange and contrived. Even the novice in Judaism will recognize the *ersatz* for the authentic. Hence, to change the law requires basically a respectful approach to the spirit of Torah and to the needs of the people.

Will all this come to pass? I believe it will. The religious Jews in Israel will solve their problems. They must. You can't run a state with *Shabbos goyim*. Nor will the irreligious youth find ultimate fulfillment in personal ambitions, in the development of the State, or in national heroism. Ultimately, the majority of religious Jews in Israel will develop that viable form of Judaism which will be attached to the eternal truths of the past and will express the spiritual needs of the present.

The Jews in America will live their own religious life. Jews who seek a Judaism without Halachah will find themselves with a kind of faith which will be just another denomination near Unitarianism. In fact, their fellow Americans will soon wonder why they don't accept Christianity. Rabbis in the South tell how southern Protestants assume that Jews believe in another version of Christianity, but do not accept the Christian Savior.

For the Jews who choose to live *with* Halachah, the following will occur: (1) Our religion will mean something to us. Now empty form, it will be part of the life at home, social gatherings and the rich colorful religion in the Synagogue. (2) Our religion—Judaism—will be an integral part of our personal selves, as we become more observant and find personal fulfillment and significance through it.

GOD

Why We Must Talk about God

Seeking the Ultimate

The Jewish Conception of God

God and I: Thoughts on a Personal God

Why We Must Talk about God

I was brought up in a strongly traditional atmosphere, and studied in a Yeshivah through my elementary, high school, and college education. We took it for granted, as we studied the Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud with commentaries, that we all believed in God. If in adolescence, a student had his doubts, he discussed them only with his close friends. No one discussed such problems with the rabbi-instructor.

I believe that this attitude toward faith and belief in God is Biblical and Rabbinic in character. Unlike the Greeks who excelled in speculation about metaphysical questions, the Bible simply accepts the belief in the Creator; the Rabbis simply assume a Divine Revelation. These are first principles, axioms in Biblical-Rabbinic thought. The Bible and the Rabbis did not talk about these axioms, or speculate about them, or try to prove them. The Jewish tradition, when it discourses with itself, when it is explaining itself to fellow Jews, has no need to talk about God.

My Yeshivah training and the way we studied Bible and Talmud explains why I feel defensive about the title introducing this section's theme: Why we must talk about God. When the Jewish *Weltanschauung* and its *milieu* is whole, there is no need to talk about God; one simply accepts Him and goes on from there. But when Jewish people have wandered away from the faith of our fathers, when clouds of doubt and confusion darken our thinking, when the axioms themselves are questioned or improperly understood, then is it important to begin talking about these axioms of our religious way of life.

To grasp more concretely the need to talk about God, let us discuss actual people. Charles Angoff, leading novelist of American-Jewish literature, portrays this Jew: "There is a lawyer who comes to our house, who used to be an Orthodox Jew, and a truly believing and observing one, in his younger days, then for some two decades was an agnostic socialist who made special efforts to dissociate himself from all forms of Jewishness, but has now joined a Conservative temple, because, as he says, 'It's pleasant to be among people who remind me of my father and mother, and I love the *chazan*.' He fasts on Yom Kippur. I asked him why and he said, 'I don't know. I don't even know why I've stopped working on Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. I guess the reason is that I think I want to stand up at least once a year and be counted as a Jew. It's really got little to do with religion.' " 120

Here is another Angoff portrayal of an actual Jew: "There is a suburb in Buffalo where I often lecture, and there, only a few months ago, I met a man who poured out his heart to me, as people often do to total strangers. He said: 'In Newark, New Jersey, where I came from, I was a plain non-believer. We moved here three years ago, and my wife and I were all set to continue our way of life. But our boy was nearing thirteen, *bar-mitzvah*, and our girl was about fifteen. Their friends, most of them happened to be Christian. In Newark we had always lived among Jews.' He smiled, 'I guess when you live among Jews it's easier to be a sort of non-Jew, you know what I mean. I'm still a little bit of an *apikores*, but only a little. What I believe, what I don't believe, I really don't know.' " 121

In these Jews described by Angoff, we see a clear awareness and desire for being Jewish. There is the emotional tone of the prodigal son who wants to come home. But we also behold the lack of real religious conviction. The lawyer doesn't know *why* he fasts on Yom Kippur or stops working on Rosh

Hashanah. The Buffalo suburbanite says frankly: "What I believe, what I don't believe, I really don't know."

In contrast to real conviction on being Jews, we see here vague cloudiness about belief in Judaism—a condition we can observe throughout American Jewry.

Clarification of Convictions

This brings us to the first reason to talk about God: to clarify our own convictions about this fundamental principle in our religion.

Such clarification was not essential when everybody lived in the ghetto and observed the Mitzvos and Torah way of life in a fairly uniform manner. The Jews in the ghettos and *shtetelach* observed a separate style of living of their own, with its distinctive tone, aroma, tempo, flavor. Even if certain individuals did not accept the basic religious convictions, group cohesiveness carried them along on its own momentum. Everybody lived in the same way. Even when the *mores* in the *shtetelach* or the "big city" weakened, people lived together and perpetuated a survival feeling—a desire to continue to live together. They liked each other's company, each other's jokes, food, facial expressions, shoulder shrugs. In such a segregated community where Jews prayed differently from the surrounding population, and talked, ate, dressed, and even earned their livelihoods differently, there was no strong need for religious clarification. Vagueness of religious belief may indeed have been an advantage, for each person felt free to evolve his own personal philosophy and attitude.

In our fluid, democratic, and integrated society, where Jews mix and mingle with ever increasing freedom, there is in contrast a crying need for clarification of our personal religious convictions. In a free democratic society, folk diet,

folk humor, and family sentiment are poor substitutes for religious convictions. The American Jew needs inner, personal, religious convictions to hold him to his religious heritage. He needs a concept of religious belief and faith that will serve him as an individual and keep him loyal to his Jewish heritage.

Vagueness or uncertainty in religious belief can only lead to indifference and cynicism. When the suburbanite says: "What I believe, what I don't believe, I really don't know," he can't mean simply that he really does not know. He has only to read the Rambam's Thirteen Principles of Faith to know what he should believe as a Jew. Our suburbanite is voicing more than familiarity with or ignorance of the Jewish creed: he is alluding to his own personal convictions. Does Jewish dogma or the Rambam's creed have any meaning for him? Does it express his own deeply held faith? This Buffalo suburbanite is talking for us all when he says: "What I believe, what I don't believe, I really don't know." To permit himself to continue in his vague religious dream world can lead to his ultimate unconcern and estrangement from the Jewish heritage.

Hence, it is important to talk about God, to help clarify our own convictions, and to strengthen our religious beliefs, so that we may better know what we really believe.

Vagueness Leads to Anarchy

The second reason we must talk about God is to help our children in their religious development.

A few months ago, our congregation devoted the Minnionaire Sunday Morning Breakfast discussion to this subject: "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Being Jews." After discussing the apparent disadvantage—discrimination—a few boys brought up the advantages. They pointed out

that "it is easy to be a Jew." I couldn't understand the significance of this remark because I was accustomed to hear the opposite, "Es is shver tzu zein a yid," and I asked the boys to explain why it is easy to be a Jew.

They answered: "We have freedom. We Jews can do as we please and we can believe as we please." This remark still did not make sense to me. The laws in the Bible and Shulchan Aruch, "Thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," are very specific in what we must and must not do, and the Thirteen Principles of Faith list what we must believe.

So I persisted and asked: "What do you mean, we can do as we please and believe as we please?" Here is their explanation: "The Rabbi cannot tell us what to do and what to believe. *Judaism is a democratic religion.* However, the priest or minister does 'boss' the life of the Christians. He tells them what to do and what to believe."

Our own religious vagueness leads to religious anarchy in our children. The ex-orthodox lawyer and the Buffalo suburbanite do not know why they fast on Yom Kippur, or what to believe and what not to believe. *But that Jews do believe, and that Jews do have religion, this they know.* This confused American-Jewish generation was brought up by immigrant parents, no doubt. They heard Yiddish spoken at home. The "zeideh" and "bobe" practiced real orthodox religion even though father had to work on Shabbos to "make a living." Mother kept a Kosher home, and scrubbed the house clean for Pesach. Everybody lived in the immigrant ghetto: the East Side of New York, the West Side of Chicago, or the South Side of Philadelphia. From such an environment came the ex-Orthodox lawyer or the Buffalo suburbanite. Into our childhood consciousness were kneaded and hammered the commandments of our faith, the "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," along with a powerful feeling of being Jews.

The young boys in the Minnionaires come from American-Jewish homes one generation away from the American ghetto. They do not hear Yiddish at home, except for cursing and smutty stories. Kashrus is kept in only half the homes, and Shabbos has almost lost its full significance. To our kids, being Jewish means "freedom"—doing what you please, believing what you choose. "The Rabbi can't tell us what to do," they say.

Will this generation, not brought up in any ghetto, American or European, inherit the Jewish religious values? Will they imbibe any of the sentimental folk feelings we possess? What can parents who do not know what they believe tell their children to believe?

In order to avoid religious anarchy in our children, we must avoid religious vagueness in ourselves. For this second reason, we must talk about God.

God, Keystone of our Religion

The third reason is that all our discussions so far lead up to this point: God, the keystone of Jewish religion.

The Rabbis in the Talmud refer to our third reason. A Jew must first take upon himself the "Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven" before he will take upon himself the "Yoke of Mitzvos." Before there can be an acceptance of Mitzvos there must be first an acceptance of "Ol Malchus Shamayim"—of God Himself.¹²² Before we can give ourselves to the disciplines of prayer, ritual, or Halachah, we must accept the "Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven."

In terms of our own thinking, we must realize that a mature, thought-out conception of God will help us lead more religious lives. By stimulating our thinking, by person-to-person-discussion, by making ourselves approach the rabbi and asking, "Rabbi, help me develop for myself a real

living faith in God," will we have laid a firm foundation for a religious life, for prayer, Mitzvos, and Halachah.

Our Goals

What do I hope to accomplish in these essays? I am not so optimistic as to think that all non-believers, all doubters, will be promptly convinced by our discussion and overnight become "*Ma-aminim Bnai Ma-aminim*" (believers and sons of believers). If I were, I should only be gravely disappointed with you and with myself. Those who do not believe cannot be convinced by proof. You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink—unless he is thirsty. That is why the philosopher Kant dismissed all proofs, though other thinkers still maintain that rational proofs are valid. Most of us, however, are not philosophers, and we do not find or lose our deepest convictions merely on rational grounds.

I do hope to accomplish three things:

1. To present the dogmas of Judaism, the creed of Judaism on God, and to explain them so that they become better understood. Dogmas are like guideposts or a correct address: they keep you on the right path to your destination. Dogmas about God help you to get closer to the real living God, and to keep you from false conceptions about God. For those people who believe in God, these discussions will clarify and help reject heretical, non-Biblical views about God. This is a very important achievement for the survival of our religion and for retaining its monotheistic purity.
2. To show why I believe in these dogmas, and so maybe get some of you to believe in them too. Belief is the subjective mental acceptance of the creed, dogma, or idea, based upon evidence or authority. To say "I believe in the Creator . . . ," as the Rambam does, means that both your

mind and heart accept the idea that God is the Creator. To get other people to believe in the dogma is more difficult than accepting it yourself.

3. To build and strengthen our faith in God. Faith is your relation to God, whereas belief is your relation to dogma: you believe in dogma, but you have faith in God.

We open our prayers: *Elokainu V'elokai Avosainu*—"Our God and God of our Fathers." "Our God"—that's faith; "God of our Fathers"—that's belief. Faith is more audacious: you are a pioneer, you go out on your own. Belief is traditional: you rely upon the heritage of the ages. Faith is personal and direct; belief is indirect. Dogmas are the flying instruments; belief is flying by those instruments. Faith is to fly *without* instruments, to rely on your own experience and "know-how."

A Chasid once started to recite the Thirteen Principles of Faith by Maimonides: "I firmly believe that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is the Creator and Ruler of all created beings. . . ." Suddenly he paused: "Can I say that I firmly believe? If I did, I would not be so fretful, so profane, so absorbed only in business, neglectful in charity; I would not pray so half-heartedly . . ." And then he thought more about it. "It can't be that I firmly believe. Look at my actions. . . . But if I don't, how can I tell a lie? How can I read this prayer in honesty? No, I will not say it. A liar is worse than a non-believer." And he thought, "If I don't say it, it would mean that I do not believe. *But I do believe!*" Again he paused, until he found a way out. He decided to say: "Oh God, please help me that I *might* firmly believe. . . ."

We, too, with our weakness, our doubts and preoccupations, must pray like the Chasid: O God, please help us, that we might firmly believe in Thee and in Thy Torah.

Seeking the Ultimate

The major difficulty in arousing spiritual awareness in people in our technological, scientific, and urban civilization is the fundamental faith of people in some version of materialism. As we look about, we behold the vast accomplishments of industrial and architectural technology, the major advances in bio-chemistry and medicine, the great strides in sub-atomic physics, and conclude that man's happiness and salvation is not only here on earth but lies in continued progress along the same direction. There is no need for God. Now, unemployed because of scientific "know-how," He is another victim of technological obsolescence.

Some political difficulties with Russia and China mar the horizon, and unfortunately a thermo-nuclear bomb hovers suspended in the background. Of this everyone is aware. But were it not for these "foreign affairs," which bring about the highest peacetime budget and ultimately our severe income taxes, we would be living in a potential paradise. Only the more sensitive among us are aware that our materialist heaven has been purchased at the price of our spiritual birthright. The average person's eyes are still blinded by the glow of mechanical achievement. To remind the average man of our century about God is very difficult.

There is a plethora of lip-service to religion today. Churches and synagogues are bursting with growing memberships; new buildings rise constantly all around us. Every year brings us new statistics. With Will Herberg, I am suspicious of this movement toward religious conformity. It reflects not so much religious growth as the general swing toward conformity that our social scientists frequently describe in our society.

Talk to people who join our synagogues and churches. I talk to my members, I listen carefully to their religious views

and theories. They echo the views of Charles Angoff's ex-orthodox lawyer who explained his reason for going to "shul" on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur thus: "I guess the reason is that I want to stand up at least once a year and be counted as a Jew. It's really got little to do with religion."

Notwithstanding all the statistical evidence for religious "growth," the average American worshipper in the twentieth century prays with a split personality. He is imprisoned in the world-view of a powerful materialism; at the same time he would like to behold the revelation of a living God. He is landlocked in the vast expanse of a contented materialist harbor; and at the same time he would like to discover new waters of living faith.

He would like to repeat with the Psalmist: ¹²³

Whither can I go from Thy spirit?
Or whither can I flee from Thy presence?

But instead, deep down in the caverns of his thought, his doubt cries out bitterly:

Whither shall I go *for* Thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee *for* Thy presence?

This is the problem of our people, if I am to take their spoken views seriously. They would like to behold the living God, they want to drink from wells of living waters, they want to discover a faith that moves mountains. For this, "positive thinking" is not enough; merely to repeat phrases, recite prayers, or read the Bible, will not make us see the truth.

I have already explained in the previous chapter what we hope to accomplish in the present discussions: 1. To present the dogma. 2. To show you why I believe, and to

help you to achieve your belief. 3. To arouse your faith in God. I cannot prove to you what you do not believe, for I cannot help you find what you do not seek; but I can show you the way, the road on which you may find what you seek. I can direct you to the path where you may get a glimpse of the truth.

Utilitarian View

The first approach to the world is the utilitarian—to look upon nature and the world as a useful tool to be exploited. This view seeks to harness nature for the needs of man. As the farmer learned the seasons when it is most profitable to plow, plant and harvest, so do the scientists and engineers master the ways of nature and learn her secrets, so as to better extract her wealth and to benefit from her power.

Coal, oil, and hydro-electric energy are used as power resources in nature, to turn the turbines, the dynamos, and the machines of our mechanical civilization. This power helps man to produce more with less human energy; this power in the first, second, and now third industrial revolution gave man his high standard of living, which enables an average working-class family to obtain food, clothing, leisure, and culture unavailable to the richest classes in previous generations. Living in a mechanical civilization has increased man's self importance. The ability to harness nature and exploit her has fed man's ego; this ability lets him feel like a god.

A visit to the large single-unit gasoline "cracking" plant outside your city will give you this same feeling. Go through this vast plant, constructed by human planning, with its miles of copper wire comprising its delicate nervous system, with the miles of pipes of every size and diameter making up its gigantic digestive system. Then behold a panel board with its array of luminous dials, the tireless, unerring brain of this plant. There you see a few technicians pressing levers or turn-

ing dials to send a message along the miles of nervous system to open or close valves with tremendous pressures of a few thousand pounds per square inch, to set in motion through its digestive system tons of asphalt or crude oil. And the complexity and efficiency of this vast digestive system! It excretes no waste products; everything is used. As a visitor to the plant, even though you do not know the simplest principles involved in its operation, you share in the glory of the men who erected it, the men who operate it, and the men who finance it. You are a partner in their accomplishment, in their haughtiness and their pride. You realize that men's collective knowledge, man's collective efforts, have erected a \$200,000,000 giant which handles an annual product of \$500,000,000—yet is run by only 150 men. "My power and the strength of my hands brought me this accomplishment," you say.¹²⁴ You play god, and so the living God is seemingly not needed.

The real Caesars and the little Caesars always imagined themselves, and their followers looked upon them, as gods. Power—authoritarian political power in ancient Rome, in Nazi Germany, in Stalin's Russia, in Mussolini's Rome—gave the wielder delusions of omnipotence and supreme authority. The dictator, intoxicated with power, felt surging within himself the will of his restless, loyal, obedient masses who followed him faithfully. The dictator felt powerful, invincible.

Is it any wonder that dictatorships are Godless movements? They do not need God. They are all-powerful, they are themselves all-mighty.

This feeling of power is transmitted to every American child in this mechanistic century. The simple person participates in the delusion of power. Standing on a natural parapet overlooking the Grand Canyon gives an American a feeling

of humility: this grandeur was made by God. Standing on a balcony overlooking the Grand Coulee Dam, beholding a man-made concrete slab holding back a man-made lake, whose waters flow swiftly turning dynamos, generating *power*, power to run the machines in nearby cities, power to light the homes and farms, power to bring music, entertainment, and culture over the radios and TV into every home—standing on this balcony gives the American child of the mechanistic twentieth century a feeling of *power*: This is man-made! “My power and the strength of my hands,” he thinks, “brought me this accomplishment.”

These feelings are experienced by all men, consciously and unconsciously. The feeling of power inflates their egos, gives them a strong sense of independence, a false sense of importance.

Because of the social preoccupation with technology and use of power, a psychological “blind spot” sets itself upon the consciousness of our time. To the children of our century, *this* is the truth they behold. They are being very honest, they believe. They cannot see anything except the scientific-technological reality. This all-satisfying, all-meaningful approach is monopolistic in its effect: any other view, any other insight is blocked out.

The average person of our mechanistic age believes in a mechanistic, impersonal universe operating like a larger Tidewater plant, or like a self-operating giant Univac. He believes this because this is the world in which he lives and works, and he equates a mechanistic society with a mechanistic universe. Little does he know about the complexities of the machine he operates or admires; little does he know about the real universe in which he lives.

When the Prophet Isaiah received the call from God to speak, he was prepared to go. The Lord said to him:

"Go, and say to this people: Hear and hear, but they do not understand;

See and see, but they do not perceive." ¹²⁵

We can all hear, but only a few can understand; we can all see the situation, but only a few can perceive. Understanding, perception, is not an objective phenomenon of hearing and seeing; it is a subjective reaction to what is heard or seen, an inner grasp of patterns and purposes.

Our generation can hear, but cannot comprehend; it can see, but lacks perception. This intellectual deafness and blindness comes from our emotional reliance upon power, upon technology in every area of life.

Bertrand Russell, one of the great minds of the twentieth century, though not a religious thinker, warns the world against the danger arising from the sense of power in human communities. "Man, formerly too humble, begins to think of himself almost as a god. . . . In all this I feel a great danger; the danger of what may be called 'cosmic impiety.' The concept of reality that certain things are outside human control has been one basic attitude which inculcated the element of humility. When this check upon human pride is removed, a further step is taken on the road to a certain kind of madness. I am persuaded that this intoxication is the greatest danger of our time and that any philosophy which contributes to it is increasing the danger of vast social disaster." ¹²⁶

Russell's warning has political implications outside the view of our discussion here. But his pointing the finger at our "cosmic impiety," this "human pride" which is "a certain kind of madness," is closely related to what we are saying.

We can also apply Lord Acton's famous political aphorism to our discussion. "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The sense of power which our generation

possesses in man's technological power accomplishments is a corrupting influence. It exaggerates man's pride, makes him independent of God. It has driven all humility from his heart, drained him of his cosmic piety, driven God from his soul.

A second effect of our mechanistic age is that it makes man look upon nature as a machine.

The frontier scientists, who are exploring nature, see her in her capriciousness before they see her orderliness; and even after they discover her laws, they realize that they behold only the surface of things and that each new "explanation" only sets in motion other new questions. They are not guilty of what Whitehead calls the Dogmatic Fallacy. "The error consists in the persuasion that we are capable of producing notions which are adequately defined in respect to the complexity of relationship required for their illustration in the real world." ¹²⁷

But the average man in the street worships Scientism, this twentieth century religion whose priests are dressed in white vestments of cleanliness, with turnabout collars and vests. Our advertising hucksters know this very well, and so for any new product which they want you to take into your mouth, they convince you by dressing up a priest of scientism in his white turnabout vest and collar, with a reflector on his forehead as his visor to make him look like a bishop, holding up a wonder-working bottle or box. Now you know it is healthy and safe; it will surely cure your falling arches or your duodenal ulcer.

That the universe is a vast mystery, the average person does not realize. The little knowledge he has seems to offer a satisfactory explanation. Or he believes that the scientist has an adequate explanation.

Primitive men, we are told, imagined God to be in their own image but without human weaknesses. This made a

sociologist declare: "If man is created in the image of God, I do not know; that God is created in the image of man, this I do know." And students of religion point out that primitive religion had an anthropomorphic view of God, and gave Him human qualities. Modern man outgrew anthropomorphic religion, but in its place he erected a mechanistic view of the universe not in the image of man but in the image of Univac.

Let us not misunderstand what I am saying. By recognizing that the utilitarian or power view of nature generates in man a feeling of pride and a mechanistic outlook thereby blinding him to God's presence, and by recognizing this approach as "the greatest danger of our time," I am not suggesting that we discard our technological progress. I am not implying what Eugene O'Neill does in his play, *Dynamo*, wherein the hero worshipped the electric dynamo, the new source of power, as his new god, and becoming sorely disappointed in his new faith, set out to smash a great dynamo, the object of his worship. Let us accept these tools for what they are, and use them and benefit from them; but let them not blind us to the full truth. The Bible commands man: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them: Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." ¹²⁸

Let us rule over them: harness nature to our needs, but never become ourselves either a "little Caesar" or a cog in a Univac universe.

Romantic View

The second approach to the world is the romantic one. It looks upon nature as a thing of beauty—not power to be

harnessed, but a gift to be enjoyed as it is, uncontaminated, in the raw, unspoiled. The romantic approach is filled with cosmic piety and a veneration for the natural. With this attitude toward nature a man is held spellbound by its sublimity and awesome beauty.

John Ruskin, the great critic who lived on the threshold of the English industrial revolution, was extremely critical of the mine operators and factory owners who defaced the lovely English countryside with ugly industrial plants belching clouds of smoke and gases into the air and polluting the streams with waste matter. As the virgin forests were denuded of their timber for their mines and plants, he was shocked.

The romantic individual does not see in nature the source for power and the vehicle for exploitation. The romantic mind or mood beholds only the beauty of the sunset; it admires the tall majestic tree; it is baffled by the deep shadowy forest, overwhelmed by the mighty mountains; it gazes lazily upon floating clouds in a blue sky; it sleeps on grass, walks on sand, wades in puddles, dives into waves, and breathes the crisp cold air. The romantic loves nature as she is. Read the social philosopher Rousseau, or any poem by Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, or Tennyson, and see how these men express their love of the beauty of the world as it is.

Nature lovers have a worshipful attitude toward Mother Nature. Whereas the power worshippers are filled with cosmic impiety, as Russell pointed out, the nature lovers are filled with cosmic religiosity. The Greeks regarded the elemental powers of nature as holy. Expressions such as "the holy rain" or "the holy light" are characteristic of their attitude. In Greek religion every elemental-natural force had its own particular god; the Greeks worshipped these forces as they were.

Paganism or polytheism rests upon the worship of such

forces in nature. The nature-loving polytheist was so lost in the multiplicity of forces, in the richness of color and sound in nature, in the plethora of smells, tastes, and moods, that he could never realize the existence of any unity. Each segment of nature seemed so complete in itself that it had no relationship to other segments. He felt no need of understanding or comprehending; he felt only mystery, humility, and pleasure in nature as she is.

Because the nature lover accepted nature as she is, he took the opposite attitude to that of the applied scientist. The nature lover said, "Give in to nature, learn her ways and surrender to her embrace," whereas the applied scientist sought out nature's laws in order to enslave her, to change and exploit her.

Modern man accepts some of the Romantic Philosophy; he enjoys nature during the spring and summer; he can appreciate her beauty and can surrender to her health-giving powers in resort areas in his vacation time. But modern man does not worship nature or a part of it as salvation, and the be-all and cure-all of life's problems. There is no need for me to spell out the danger in such an attitude because no one maintains such a viewpoint; there is no need to show how worshipping nature leads to polytheism and idolatry. To primitive man, however, and to the ancients in Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome, these errors were accepted truths. With the march of history and changed conditions, it became evident to most people that they must drop the worship of nature and merely accept her for what she is. It is very difficult for us to appreciate the attraction that nature worship had for man.

Just as in ancient times man worshipped nature, in modern times man is prone to worship power and mechanical ability. Both views challenge the belief in God; both views take man away from the truth, from the living God.

In post-modern history, the same development will take place. People will be liberated from the enchantment of power and mechanical ability. They will view mechanical know-how as we now do the blessings of nature. They, too, will find it difficult to imagine how people in the mid-twentieth century looked upon science and mechanics as salvation, as the be-all and cure-all for every human and social problem.

Biblical View

The third approach to the world is the Biblical one. This attitude looks upon nature and the world from the view of the ultimate. The Biblical view raises ultimate questions and seeks ultimate answers.

The Midrash explains in a very simple fashion how Abraham found his way to God. The legend tells that Abraham had to be hidden away soon after his birth because astrologers had warned King Nimrod of a child about to be born who would overthrow his kingdom. In order to save the child from death, he was hidden in a cave with a nurse for three years. The story continues: When Abraham left the cave, his heart kept reflecting upon the creation of the universe and he determined to worship all the luminaries until he discovered which of them was God. He saw the moon whose light illumined the darkness of night from one end of the world to the other, and noticed the vast retinue of stars. "This is God!" he exclaimed, and worshipped it all through the night. In the morning, when he beheld the dawn of the sun before which the moon darkened and its power waned, he exclaimed: "The light of the moon must be derived from the light of the sun, and the universe only exists through the sun's rays." So he worshipped the sun throughout the day. In the evening, the sun sank below the horizon, its power waned, and the moon reappeared with the stars and the

planets. Abraham concluded: "*Adon yesh aleichem*"—"Surely all these have one Master; unto Him I shall pray, unto Him I shall bow." ¹²⁹

In this Midrash, the rabbis show us the way to God. It is through seeking the ultimate, the final, the end, the highest and best. Mind you, this is not a proof, but a path. If you proceed along this path in seeking the ultimate, you too will find God.

Isaiah, in asking his people to have faith in God, cannot give them actual evidence. If you want to explain the unknown to a person, you go from the known to the unknown by analogy and gradually you extend his area of knowledge. But how can you explain God to a person who has no interest in finding Him? "To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One." ¹³⁰

God is incomparable to anything we know. Hence, Isaiah advises on the path to God.

"Lift up your eyes on *high* and see;
Who created these?" . . . ^{130a}
"Why do you say, O Jacob
And speak, O Israel,
My way is hid from the Lord?" ^{130b}
Lift up your eyes on *high* and see!

A person who does not lift up his eyes on high, believes that his way is hidden from God—like the little child hiding his own eyes and pretending you cannot see him. He cannot perceive, and he cannot understand.

The Psalmist, suggests the same approach to God—seeking the ultimate. Read Psalm 104, carefully. The Psalmist describes the cosmos and its vast order. He describes the interrelationship of the various parts of the universe to show how one aspect of nature helps to sustain another: organic

nature supports vegetation, vegetation supports animal life, vegetable and animal give life to man.

“Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
And plants for man to cultivate
That he may bring forth food from the earth,
And wine to gladden the heart of man,
Oil to make his face shine,
And bread to strengthen man’s heart.” ¹³¹

We can read the whole beautiful Psalm as would a non-religious scientist to demonstrate how perfect are the laws of nature. A non-religious scientist can see in this poem what all science has seen—an orderly cosmos, not a capricious chaos.

As a result of the research of the International Geophysical Year, all the sixty nations and the world’s leading scientists collected data about the earth, its innards, its atmosphere, stratosphere, ionosphere, and the distant cosmos. They brought in *new* data, *more* data, *revolutionary* data. But all this only emphasized again that this is an orderly universe governed by law. Which is what Psalm 104 has said a long time ago! This is what Psalm 148, recited every morning of the year in our *Shacharis* service, also emphasizes:

“He fixed them fast forever and ever;
He gave them a law which none transgress.” ¹³²

But Psalm 104 is not only a song to an impersonal orderly cosmos. In four verses, 27, 28, 29, and 30, the Psalmist shows the way for all scientists to follow. Mind you, scientists may reject this approach as unscientific, as the non-religious in all ages have rejected it. But the rejection is itself not a scientific reaction, just as the acceptance is beyond science. More

data, however new or revolutionary, can neither refute nor prove what the Psalmist says in the 30th verse:

“When Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created;
And Thou renewest the face of the ground.”

The Psalmist sees, behind the whole, vast, orderly cosmos with all its minute interdependent law, *the spirit of God*. It is the spirit of God which created the whole universe, sustains it, gives it order, establishes its laws, forms its plan, endows its beauty and its loveliness, stamps its purpose, and ordains its end. To the Psalmist, seeking the ultimate, lifting up your eyes on high, means to go beyond the given reality and to see the sustaining spirit which makes reality what it is.

Seeking the Ultimate

We have already explained why people who approach nature either in the utilitarian or the romantic manner cannot go *beyond* nature. They are pre-occupied either with machines to exploit nature or with enjoying the pleasures nature can offer. It is the essence of the Biblical approach to nature to seek the ultimate and to go beyond the apparent.

Modern thought has been insisting, however, that ultimate questions are irrelevant. The average person, by not seeking the ultimate, seriously makes it irrelevant in fact, as well as in theory. What makes the ultimate questions seem irrelevant and beside the point?

As long as our given existence is satisfactory, as long as our attention is contentedly occupied with the given world *as it is*, we are not impelled to seek the ultimate, that which is beyond the given reality. Life is complete *as is*. When our total situation becomes unsatisfactory, and we are filled with

anxiety about the ever-present reality, and want something new and better, it is then that we are prepared to seek the ultimate, and are ready to search for "the beyond."

If you are fundamentally satisfied with the materialist view of reality, or if you are content with the quest for power, ever-new gadgets and new forms of pleasure, you are not yet ready for the road to the ultimate. You are not ready to find God because you think you do not need Him.

The drive, the force, to make you look for the ultimate emanates from three areas of life.

1. *Personal behavior and emotional needs:* If you have reached that point in life where you see through the "rat-race" all of us indulge in; if you have decided that Cadillac fumes are no different from "Chevy" fumes; if you feel you have achieved that point of mental unrest where you have obtained the basic necessities of a healthy, quiet life and see no reason to rush for more gadgets, more money, more power, and more unrest—if you have reached this point, you are ready for seeking the ultimate.

2. *Social behavior and human needs:* When society recognizes that social problems have reached such complexity that their solution cannot be obtained by passing more laws and hiring a greater bureaucracy to administer these laws; or that more order in society will not be obtained by concentration of still more wealth, political power, or economic power among fewer individuals; and when people become dissatisfied with the rigors of conformity and the suppression of true individuality—then they will begin to seek the ultimate.

3. *Intellectual behavior and spiritual needs:* If thinking people grow dissatisfied with the materialist view of reality and find it difficult to believe that the heart of the universe is only a bundle of energy inside an atom; if they see that enveloping and enclosing the universe and its matter and

energy is a spiritual reality, then they will seek the ultimate. They will do so because the materialistic, meaningless, valueless universe will lead them to a dead end. As the humorist pointed out about the atheist who was lying in a coffin waiting for his funeral: "All dressed up and no place to go."

Does the utilitarian view seek an ultimate? In a way, yes—a utilitarian ultimate. It seeks an ultimate kind of power which requires no expenditure of human power. It seeks an ultimate kind of machine which will make the human being obsolete as a force in production and tabulation. This is the central purpose of automation: a machine which will be self-operative and self-correcting. The ultimate in the utilitarian view is a band of Univacs and robots acting as slaves waiting on all human beings. This is the "hereafter" in a materialist heaven on earth. The human being will be useful only to "push the button" in push-button cars, appliances, factories, even push-button warfare. The average human will then feel personally useless and expendable, but he will share in the false glory of worshipping the industrial giants operated by automatons and Univacs. The Russell prediction will be upon us: "cosmic impiety" will be our spiritual sickness, and we will be on the road to "a vast social disaster."

Does the romantic view seek an ultimate in pleasure, in enjoying nature? To enjoy nature means to eat properly, sleep properly, and live a quiet normal life. There can be no ultimate in this sort of thing. Those who seek the ultimate in pleasure, however, go back to the pagan thrills of orgiastic pleasure; for them the ultimate is in the past. The Orient and sub-rosa society in the West have found techniques to extend pleasure. But except for adolescent minds and the occasional adult holiday from morality, even reading this erotic literature today would make any mature person sick with disgust.

We must conclude that seeking the highest and noblest, seeking the ultimate, must be a personal, ethical and, intel-

lectual quest. Like men of God, so does the scientist, the Einstein, also seek the ultimate in nature, science, and mathematical truth. So do doctors, who seek to alleviate human suffering, seek the ultimate in their discipline. If men in government seek to bring an increasing measure of justice into the affairs of human inter-relations, they too are concerned with the ultimate—righteousness and justice for human beings.

When mankind will forsake the incomplete approaches to nature, we will behold the limitations inherent in the utilitarian and romantic attitudes and techniques, and we will turn to the Biblical view of nature. We will seek the ultimate beyond the limited confines of technical-pleasurable reality, and mankind will behold with the Psalmist:

He who made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that in them is;
Who keepeth truth forever;
Who executeth judgment for the oppressed;
Who giveth food to the hungry;
The Lord looseth the prisoners;
The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind;
The Lord raiseth up them that are bowed down;
The Lord loveth the righteous;
The Lord preserveth the strangers;
He upholdeth the fatherless and widow.
But the way of the wicked He brings to ruin.
The Lord shall reign forever,
Thy God, O Zion, to all generations!
Halleluyah—Praise the Lord.¹³³

The Jewish Conception of God

We have analyzed the utilitarian and romantic views of the world, and showed how these tendencies keep man from God. We also indicated the personal, social, and intellectual needs for God. We tried to explain how to seek God and find Him.

Where philosophy ends, where it must stop because of its own critical spirit, religion begins. Judaism rests upon the ultimate reality—the faith in a living God. In this chapter, we propose to analyze the Jewish conception of God, as found in our Biblical, Rabbinic, and philosophic literature.

It is tragic to find people rejecting a belief and faith in God because of some foolish, childish notions. What do they reject? Not the faith and belief in the real living God. Rather, they reject their own foolish conception of Him. A mature and pure conception of God will *aid* in our belief and faith in Him. On the other hand, it is not a guarantee for a belief and faith in God. Unless we are weary with the utilitarian and romantic misconception and preoccupation with our natural world, and unless we are moved to seek God for the three reasons mentioned in the last chapter, even a most accurate conception of God will not arouse belief and faith in Him. However, when we are ready for belief and faith, when our minds are ripe for such an outlook, it is then that a conception of God which can meet the needs and standards of a critical approach will help us. It is mainly for such people that we offer our thoughts here. For those who already believe, we hope what we have to say will clarify and eliminate childish views. We hope that through this clarification, as with the Rambam's purification of the monotheism of Judaism, our faith in God will rest on a surer foundation.

The Biblical Conception of God

The Biblical conception of God rests upon the first verse of the Bible. "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." ¹³⁴

Prior to creation there was only God—no universe, no matter, no substance. At a certain point, God performed an act of creation which brought reality into being. This is the ontological meaning of the first verse. Reality, being, was created by God; He brought it about. The Universe *is* because God brought it into reality. Without creation there could be no verb *is*. The Bible emphasizes this clearly, when it points out that Creation called reality into being and was an act of will on the part of God. "And the Lord said, 'Let there be' . . ." It was a decision by God to bring the world into being, and therefore He said, "Let there be. . . ."

It is clear that the world did not form itself; and that the physical reality was not always in existence. It was commanded to be. This is the Biblical conception of God, the Creator.

This conception of God the Creator has two corollaries: 1. It emphasizes the dependence of everything on God. Everything was created. Against ethical dualism, which says there are two forces in the universe, good and evil, the Bible teaches that God is the *only* source of reality as Isaiah taught: "I am the Lord and there is none else . . . I make peace and create evil." ¹³⁵ 2. It emphasizes the distance between the Creator and the creature. It places the creature outside the *creative* ground. The creature's existence is contingent (*Ef-shar Hametzi-us*—Rambam) upon the Creator, Whose existence is absolute (*Mechuyav Hametzi-us*).

Metaphysical Dualism

The Bible offers a *metaphysical definition* of the universe. It is dualistic. Before creation there was only God; after creation there is God and there is Universe—two realities. Two kinds of “*is-ness*.” The statement, “the universe is,” makes sense to us because it possesses a material reality. The statement, “God is,” is less clear to us, obviously, because God is not a material reality. But according to the opening statement of the Bible, it is God the non-material reality, who created the material reality, the universe. This is *dualism*: two realities. The Bible teaches a dualistic metaphysics. Yet, it teaches a monotheistic theology: *Sh'ma Yisroel Hashem Elokainu Hashem Echod*. (Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.) It teaches an ethical monism: “One law and one judgment shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you.”¹³⁶

It is important to get this clear, so we'll repeat: Ontologically—as to the nature and being of our universe—the Bible teaches dualism. Ethically and theologically, however, the Bible is monistic. Do not let these words scare you. For clarity of thought they are as important as electron, atom, and molecule are for chemistry.

Greek Dualism

In contrast to the Bible, Greek thought presented another outlook. It assumed that matter always was; *there was no creation*. This would be materialism, if they had gone no further. There is only one reality—the material one. But among the Greeks, Aristotle and Plato believed in God. So they said that God *formed* the stuff that was eternally present. There are differences between Plato and Aristotle about God's function with the *eternal matter*, *hylic matter*; for our purposes of understanding the Biblical conception of God, it is sufficient

to point out that the Greek view limits God. He has no *will*, no choice. Matter is eternal; God is eternal; they exist side by side. And God did not create the matter; He found it and He shaped the matter to give it form. They are like two partners requiring each other to make a universe.

(According to Aristotle, God is the final cause; and maybe to Plato He may be also the formal cause—but not the efficient cause. In the Bible, God is primarily the efficient cause, and also the formal and final cause.)

Difference Between Biblical and Greek Views

This leads to a major difference between the Biblical view of God and the Greek view of God. The Bible knows of a *personal* God, since He creates at *will*. He maintains a person-to-person relationship with His children. God speaks to Adam and Eve, to Noah and his sons, to Abraham and Sarah, to Moses; He reveals Himself to the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai; God then speaks to His chosen representatives, the Prophets.

The Greeks did not experience or know a personal universal God; when they believed in polytheism their gods were personal; but as they matured and understood a universal God, He was not personal. The God which is the *final cause* is entirely indifferent and passive to the universe and its persons.

Universality of God at the Beginning of Judaism

Bible critics are prepared to admit that the Biblical view of God is personal, as mentioned, but they underestimate His universality. They cannot accept the view that the Hebrews in the early stages of their development envisioned a universal God who is also personal, or a personal God who is also universal. This is a Christian prejudice, as we shall soon explain.

To show how foolish and prejudiced such a view is, consider God's revelation to Moses. Moses asks God, "When they ask me who sent me, what shall I say unto them?" God answers: "Tell them: '*Eheyeh asher Eheyeh*,' sent me to you." ¹⁸⁷ God calls himself *Eheyeh*—"I'll be what I'll be." This verse Herman Cohen called the loftiest definition of God. God is *Being*, "I'll be." The source of all being and reality, He who created the universe speaks to Moses. In this Biblical verse we find the universal God also talking as a Person.

Let's be clear about the term, "person." When we apply it to God, we do not mean the physical qualities of the human person. The Rambam makes it abundantly clear that the anthropomorphic expressions are crude analogies to make the Bible understood by unsophisticated people. They do not describe the real qualities of God.

Even if we accept, for discussion's sake, the critical view about the Bible, that these crude anthropomorphic expressions should be taken literally, all agree that in the processes of purification the final Biblical result is a pure monotheism devoid of all anthropomorphisms. Isaiah, Job, and the advanced Psalmists did not harbor any crude conceptions of God. When the term Person is applied to God, it can only mean those essential *spiritual* qualities of personality as *Chai*, *Yachol*, *Yodai-ah*; Eternal, Omnipotent, Omniscient, analagous to the qualities which make each human being different from each of the other two billion human persons in the world. God is a non-material Being, Creator, Who possesses a Personality. This is the Bible's conception: God is a Universal Person.

The Greek philosophers did not know of a personal God. The Greek philosophers believed in a God who is part of the world process of reality. As we explained, since God did not create matter, but matter always was, we have two co-

equal partners. They work together to form a universe and everything in it. It is difficult to separate matter from God, because in the universe they are intertwined. Modern philosophers like Whitehead take up this Greek view and speak of God as being part of the creative process, or God *as* the creative process within the universe. Mordecai Kaplan, in his Reconstructionist philosophy, borrowed from this source.

For the Bible, God is not intertwined with the Universe. He created it. The students of the Bible make it clear that God of the Bible is *transcendent*—He is beyond the universe. His power and influence make themselves felt *in* the universe. God sends ten plagues upon the Egyptians; He feeds the Hebrews in the desert. This is God manifesting His power upon the world and *in* the world, although according to the Bible, He is *apart* from the world.

In the present discussion, we will not go into the ethical or religious manifestations of God, to which the prophets allude, such as Amos' God of Justice, Hosea's God of Love, or Isaiah's God of Holiness. These values are basic to religion and Judaism, but they do not perplex the modern mind; they are not germane to other basic theological ideas and beliefs. Hence we omit them.

Resumé

Now for a short resumé.

God created a universe. This implies a metaphysical or ontological dualism: God is, the universe is. The Bible teaches theological monotheism and ethical monism. God is Personal and Universal. God is transcendent, wholly above the world, although His power and influence are in the world.

All this may sound strange to many of us. But, then, you cannot say that you don't believe in God or you do believe in God, unless you know and can explain what it is you do

or do not believe in. As we proceed, we'll repeat and deepen the ideas, so this skeleton will take on flesh and bones and become more meaningful.

Here we have the basic categories of the Jewish conception of God. In later ages, certain aspects are clarified or emphasized. There is actually nothing new developed. *This is my own Orthodox view.* The full universal, personal, ethical monotheism was developed by *Moshe Rabbenu* and clarified by the prophets. *Everything thereafter is commentary.*

Rabbinic Tradition

The Rabbis continue to teach the conception of God as propounded in the Bible. The Rabbis or Pharisee teachers instituted the prayer-services: *Shacharis*, *Minchah*, *Ma-ariv*; from these prayers which they composed and which have remained the liturgy in the synagogue service, we see the basic conception of God. In the *Shacharis* and *Ma-ariv* services, God is referred to as a Creator and ruler of the universe. He is called Revealer of the Torah, Savior and Redeemer of Israel.

The Rabbis did not have to struggle against idolatry as did the prophets. The people had lost their "taste" for idolatry, and polytheism was dead. The Rabbis had another task to perform. They had to oppose the corruption and contamination of pure monotheism: *Shma Yisroel . . . Hashem Echod*—God is ONE.

Rabbinic literature is filled with wise sayings, parables, and homilies, deepening and clarifying the Biblical conception of God. The Rabbis had to oppose too much religion, too much superstition, in order to reserve veneration and worship for the true and only living God. In the two centuries before Christianity was born, Palestine went through a few military attempts to gain independence; Jews fought

wars, they were defeated, and needed new hope. A great religious revival set in. The authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls lived then and the Pharisees flourished then, too.

People believed in spirits, angels, divine messengers, holy men, and human saviors. The time was ripe with religious fermentation and proliferation. To many people the universal God made sense; it seemed logical and right. But the simple folk wondered how One God could look after the needs of all mankind and help millions of individuals. They wanted a *personal God*. People created different spirits and holy places, mystery cults, complicated secret ritual, introducing the novice to a personal spirit who could help for a specific need. The God, the simple people knew, was an impersonal deistic God, who did not care for human needs. Therefore, they turned to lesser deities as intermediaries who were more personal and had a closer contact with the people.

The Rabbis fought against these "intermediaries," personal Gods. The Rabbis emphasized the Biblical truth that the Creator, the Master of the universe *is* a personal God—"He hears their cry and saves them" says the Psalmist.¹⁸⁸

When Christianity came into being, the Rabbis were more convinced than ever that introducing a *personal* god-man, a *lower god*, who is closer to the people, was a form of idolatry because it now permitted another *person* to share in the glory and worship of God. Although the Bible does accept the existence of lesser spiritual beings, called angels, the Rabbis in the *Mishnah* refrain from even mentioning the word. They tried to discourage the people from believing in other spiritual beings. This was their struggle to preserve the purity of the *Hashem Echod*.

The Rabbis formulated a new term for God—*Makom*, (literally translated, it means *place*). In their formulation they emphasized the Biblical view. "He is the (Makom) place of the world, but the world is not His (Makom) place."¹⁸⁹

The world needs God; but God does not need the world. Existence needs place, space; God is the space and place for the world. But the world cannot be the place of God.

The word, *Makom*, is place-space—a completely impersonal word. It pertains to existence and being. Everything which is, needs space.

Yet into this abstract philosophic concept, the Rabbis introduced prayer and personal needs: "When thou prayest, regard not thy prayer as a fixed mechanical task, but as an appeal for mercy and grace before the Makom." ¹⁴⁰

It is significant that in the Talmud, the word *Makom* is used in reference with prayer: "May the Makom fulfill your deficiencies." ¹⁴¹ "May the Makom have compassion upon thee." ¹⁴² By using this abstract word, the Rabbis rejected the attempts to introduce new spirits as an intermediary between God and man. The Rabbis tried to instill within the people the conception of the Bible, *Eheyeh*, I will be; they introduced a new term: *Makom*. Both key words say *Eheyeh Makom*—I am the place of being. *God is the place for being*.

But these are not merely abstract terms. The Rabbis drew from them all their concepts of the love, tenderness, and care of the universe. *Makom* answers prayer, they said; *Eheyeh* responds with compassion.

Shechinah

The Rabbis went further and developed a concept in the understanding of God which brought God closer to people, made Him more personal. This concept is found in the new term *Shechinah*—the Divine Presence, or the spirit from God, *Ruach Elokim*. *Shechinah* is the Divine Presence which dwelled in the Holy Temple (based upon, "that I may dwell among them." ¹⁴³) It is the in-dwelling divine spirit that rests upon those who sincerely seek the Lord. "Ten who pray, the *Shechinah* hovers in their midst." ¹⁴⁴

This spirit of God is akin to *Ruach Hakodesh*, holy spirit that rested upon the prophets and inspired them to speak for the cause of the Lord.

Resumé

The Rabbis clarified the Biblical conception of God, the Universal Being—in the Bible called *Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh*. Being itself is in the Rabbinic sources called *Makom*, the place of being.

The *Havayah* (Being), or the *Makom* (Place), is the personal God.

Above all, the Rabbis rejected a God-Man—a man who was considered to be God by his followers. This was against their spiritual faith of *Hashem Echod*—monotheism. *God is the only Being!* “You have learned to know that the Lord is God; there is none else beside Him.”¹⁴⁵ Anything less is a compromise with idolatry.

Medieval-Philosophic Thought

In medieval thought, which has rationalistic and mystical forms of expression, the Jewish conception of God is further refined.

One clear cut idea is accepted by all schools of Jewish medieval philosophy; the Arabic School, the Aristotelian School, and the Neo-Platonic School: it is the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing, *Yaish Me-a-yin*. This is repeating the first verse of the Bible. God is the Creator. He made a *Yaish*, something which is, from nothing, *May-a-yin*.

Medieval thought understood God with these verbs: *Chai*, *Yachol*, *Yodaiah*. God *manifests* His 1) eternity, 2) omnipotence and 3) omniscience. These three qualities are called attributes. The preoccupation with the attributes of God saturates Jewish medieval philosophic thought because the

theologians refined the Universality of God and simultaneously retained His Personality. In removing all anthropomorphic overtones from Divine attributes, they felt it essential to retain the Personal God. Philo, the Alexandrian, was the first to begin with *Negative* Theology, expounding that all attributes about God do not add to his Being, thereby compromising His Unity, but function as negative definitions. To say that God is Eternal does not mean to say that in addition to His Being there is also His Eternity. This brings about a plurality in God's Being. Hence, the doctrine of Eternity means that God is not *temporal*. The Rambam, in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, clarified in a definitive way what all medieval Jewish philosophy was doing: "Consequently it is a false assumption to hold that He has any positive attribute; for He does not possess existence in addition to His essence . . . it is clear He has no positive attribute whatever."¹⁴⁶ This did not leave the understanding of God to pure negation. (Jewish mystics did speak of *Ayin*-Nothing.) Maimonides found other categories of attributes without compromising God's Unity and Universality. They are attributes of *relationship* (Father, King), and attributes of action.^{146a} (*Shelosh esreh middos*, Ex. 34:6 & 7) All Divine attributes which occur in Scriptures belong in these categories. Maimonides, who could not *add* existence to God's Being because he feared plurality in the *being* of God, yet felt it essential, and no logical nor semantic contradiction, to accept the Mosaic view that God manifests himself in these actions: merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness, keeping mercy unto the thousandth generations. Although Maimonides elevated the purity of God's Unity, he retained the Personal God.

How did he accomplish this? The personal attributes of a Personal God are not attributes of His Being (not adject-

tives) but they are *expressions of His actions* (verbs). God manifests Himself in mercy, in grace, in patience.

In the Maimonidean approach, we have a guide for the perplexed in our modern day. In our century, we may behold the Process, which makes for human values. But how can a Transnatural Process become a Personal God? Taking a hint from Rambam: God manifests Himself in the natural realm as a Process, but on the human-historic level, God's actions come forth as Personal. Therefore, in the first Commandment, God is known not as the Creator of the universe, the natural realm; He is revealed as the Redeemer from slavery, acting in the human realm of history.

Modern View

Now let us move into our own time. Those of us who are saturated with the mechanical accomplishments of our age and follow a "scientific" outlook share the philosophy of materialism. In a monistic universe, where only matter exists, these people cannot conceive of the existence of another quality of Being—a non-material existence.

In order to make room for some kind of spirituality and divinity, the philosophers of religious naturalism follow the insight of Spinoza, and say that the totality of our being, the universe in all its totality, seems to possess a quality of spirituality. This is the mystery in the universe; this is the quality of cosmic piety. According to this modern view, God is not a separate Being Who exists, but the *essence* of the universe as the process of evolution emerges. Milton Steinberg warns us against "the dangerous modern fallacy, the evasive proposition that God *is*, but does not *exist*, that He is only a human conception or a useful fiction Against all such slippery counsels, Judaism affirms that God's existence is independent

of man and that He alone is the most actual actuality, and realest reality of all.”¹⁴⁷

I could leave the subject at this juncture and say, “You are familiar with the materialist view; you have had a bird’s-eye view of the Jewish conception of God, and a warning from Milton Steinberg against those modern views that go contrary to the teachings of Judaism. Now, you have a choice. Are you going to accept the modern view and reject the Jewish view of God, or are you going to accept the Jewish view of God and reject the modern view?”

My Personal Belief

However, I shall now offer you my personal belief and show you how I accept the Jewish conception of God and still retain a scientific view of the universe.

As you may guess, I purposely developed the Jewish conception of God as an Independent Being around the ontological terms of *Havayah*, being, *Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh*, and *Makom*—God is the place of the universe or the universe finds its place in God. Of course, I also repeated many times that the universal God is also a personal God.

It is my belief that the basic Biblical conception and the basic rabbinic conception of God are not refuted by modern conceptions of the universe. Quite the contrary, they are fortified.

Einstein’s formula of $e = mc^2$ points to the interchangeability of energy and matter: they are both two different forms of the same thing—of being, of stuff of the universe that is existence. Matter evokes physical, concrete notions. But what does the word energy evoke in your mind? It arouses a concept about force and power that make for movement. Here you do not have any static, physical, concrete image. If anything, energy is something non-material. What is electrical energy

streaming through copper wires? What is a bolt of lightning moving through space? What is light moving at 186,000 miles per second? What is this power that pulls together through space, which we call gravity? These are all non-material forces, or at least some kind of reality that 19th century physicists could not conceive. The basic stuff of the universe is not the solid matter we imagine we touch and see.

Now, I am not saying that energy, gravity, or matter is a spiritual force. I am suggesting that modern science is opening a new horizon into the nature of reality. It has broken the iron curtain of crude materialism. It helps us to grasp better the central view of religious being. Just as behind this crude, material, concrete reality is the fluid, moving, pulsating reality of energy-magnetism, so behind all movement and energy is the universal mover of all movement, the Creator of all energy. This is my belief from the perspective of the microcosm.

Now, from the perspective of the macrocosm: Modern astronomy accepts the view that our universe is an expanding universe. Light is moving outward into something; galaxies are spinning away from each other, in fact, astronomers can measure the distance to the outer rim of this expanding universe. The theory is accepted today that at one point about four billion years ago, the universe was all pressed together, and then it blew up and has been flying apart ever since.

Into what is the universe expanding? What is beyond the outer rim of the expanding universe? Jewish thought has entertained this problem and says that the *Makom*—God—is the space or the place. Jewish mystics have said that when God contracts Himself He creates space and the universe is born (doctrine of *tzim-tzum*).

Here we behold how the most advanced concepts of the universe fit into the Jewish conception of God.

Is it a wonder, if you think deeply into this subject and

study the problem of *Being* and *Reality*, that what *Moshe Rabbenu* said about *Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh* and what the Rabbis said about *Makom*, can also make sense to our scientific age and give depth to our understanding of Reality? This truth shall stand forever because it is a truth about God and His universe.

This truth was put into a poem and attributed to Reb Levi of Berditchev. (Jan Pearce sings it very beautifully). It is a profound piece of religious ontological wisdom and faith, and it sums up the Jewish conception of God. . . . "*Ribono Shel Olom*, I will sing for you a *Dudele*. Where can I find Thee, and where can I *not* find Thee?

"Where I go? Du (Thou).

Where I stand? Du (Thou).

Only Du, again Du, but Du.

If it is good—Du.

If it is bad—Du.

East—Du, west—Du, north—Du, south—Du,

Heaven—Du, earth—Du, above—Du, below—Du.

Where I turn and where I move—Du!"

God and I

Thoughts on a Personal God

The person or individual in our culture is being submerged. Writers in sociology, psychology, economics, and art point out that the person is losing his individuality: he is disappearing in the crowd, and is achieving anonymity through conformity. The life we live is not conducive to the development of individuality and independence.

The conditioning process of becoming a social human being has always whittled down our personal freedoms and we have always expected to be members of a social group. This meant surrendering personal pet habits, ideas, mannerisms, and moods for the sake of social acceptance. But cultures in the past permitted areas of freedom, within which society did not enter, mostly because it did not have the means and tools to do so.

Historian Oscar Handlin discussed this problem, from the Jewish aspect, in the *B'nai B'rith Monthly*.¹⁴⁸ He is following the direction of William Whyte's *Organization Man*, David Reisman's *Lonely Crowd*, Eric Fromm's *Sane Society*, George Orwell's *1984*. "In the suburb, all terms of life call for conformity. Every individual is known and is assigned a role within the developing community which threatens to become an all-engulfing corporate body. Its small numbers and circumscribed life leave little room for difference or defiance." By way of contrast, the urban city gave the person freedom. Handlin writes: "The city offered the individual relative anonymity and consequent freedom; the diversity of its population presented the individual with a variety of choices. . . . In the rapidly growing metropolis, the individual could if he wished lose himself; he could remain attached to a group; or sever or change these attach-

ments. He could participate in some activities and not in others. The absence of centralized control gave these activities spontaneity and authenticity." Oscar Handlin is of the opinion that strong social conformity will weaken Judaism because the average American-Jew will not want to stand out as being different, but will want to conform, to appear like a good White Protestant.

In such a *zeitgeist*, it is difficult to focus the spotlight on the person, the individual.

Ethical Personality

According to the Bible the person expresses his real self in his freedom. As long as he is acting by instinct and satisfying his basic drives for food, sex, and shelter, he is not living on the level of a person. According to the Bible, only when a person has a choice, decision, or alternative—"This I will do; this I will not do"—he asserts himself as the person. This act is the birth of the ethical person, the individual. When the self is submerged in instinct, it kills for food, it eats. It doesn't ask if this action is right or wrong, good or bad. It struggles to survive in any fashion. This is the law of the jungle, the law of nature.

The sense of right and wrong appears when the person who commits a wrong is held responsible. Why is he responsible? Because he knew right from wrong and chose to do the wrong. He chose because he had freedom. If he had wanted to, he could have resisted, maintained self control, and done the right. The Bible concept of personality rests upon these ideas. Adam is blamed for disobeying the command of God. Cain is responsible for slaying Abel. Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed because their citizens are wicked.

The sense to know right from wrong, the freedom to choose between right and wrong, and the acceptance of punishment

or reward following the choice are fundamental to Biblical ethics. The original awareness, the choice, the consequences—these constitute the Biblical person.

If there is no person who knows right from wrong, or if the person has no freedom, there cannot be the clear-cut distinction between right and wrong. This fundamental conviction that there is right and there is wrong, which lies deeply ingrained in my being, in my thought, proves to me that there is a God. "*Mibsari echzeh elokah*"—from myself I see God." ¹⁴⁹

Deep down in our thoughts we know it is "good" to help the weak, the oppressed, the underprivileged, the downtrodden. Deep down in our beliefs we know it is "bad" to mistreat the blind, to abuse the orphan, to cheat the innocent. But there is no proof for this set of values. I cannot give reasons why this is so: it is axiomatic, basic.

There are people like the Nazis and mentally sick sadists who say that the strong should destroy the weak. There have always appeared individuals who flout the basic axioms of ethical behavior. But throughout the world, throughout history, there have been individuals, simple people and thinking people, who have said, "It is wrong to put a stumbling block before the blind; it is wrong to take advantage of the weak."

From where does this belief come, to different people in different places and in different times? Is it normally human to think this way? Maybe it is. But this is the point: *In this humane way of thinking, I see the Power who is all good, the Power who loves the weak, Who protects the orphans.* In my own devotion to the good, which comes to me naturally, I see the Source of goodness. I did not create goodness; Abraham did not create goodness. How did the ideas of good occur to anybody? This intuition in me as a person, about which I am very certain, assures me that there is a Being from Whom this intuition came, Who planted it in me.

This, then, is my argument. *If I am an ethical person, there is the great ethical Personality Who gave me this instinct for the good.*

Individual Personality Points to Divine Personality

The Midrash puts this argument in a different way. The Midrash begins with the existence of the human soul. This was self-evident.

As the soul fills the body, so God fills His world;
 As the soul maintains the body, so God maintains His
 world;
 As the soul sees, but is not seen, so God sees but is not
 seen.¹⁵⁰

To the *Midrash* the soul was the true and real essence of the person. As Saadya put it: "Cut off a limb from the living body, and the soul is not lessened."¹⁵¹ That which is the real "I" in the person remains. This is called the soul.

The Midrash moves from the "I," the "self," or the inward depth of the person, into the universe. As the person finds his own soul, he also finds the world's Soul.

We will now move in the same direction on another highway: the highway of beauty.

We can say at the outset that the sense of beauty is subjective: what is beautiful for me may not be beautiful for someone else. Nevertheless, the sense of beauty which I feel in response to a certain object, natural or artificial, is *real* within me. What is this feeling for beauty? It is a highly complex feeling, taking into consideration the relationship of shapes, the relationship of color, and the relationship of color to shapes and lines. How did it come to me? It came to me by my being born with it. I feel it within me as surely as I feel

the sense for right and wrong. The mere fact that there is a social or environmental influence in beauty does not negate the essential truth of what is being said here.

My intuition for beauty was not created by myself. I found it. I was born with it. The first man who painted had this ability in himself. Hence the sense for beauty, as complex as it is, and as different as its expressions may be, indicates that there is a Source for beauty which was implanted in me.

The same approach can be obtained with my intelligence and logical thinking. As Job put it: "Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who hath given understanding to the mind?" ¹⁵²

Where do I get this power and ability to think straight? It is in the mind. What is the mind? What lies in the cerebral cells which gives me self-awareness? What lies in the brain cells which discovered the laws of algebra and geometry? What is thought? What is understanding?

In my own understanding I see the Power of all understanding Who gave me understanding.

In my ability to comprehend the truth, in my intuition to believe that there is truth, in my drive to search for the truth—I see Him who created truth, who put the search for truth in me.

This is what Rav Kook taught: "The foundation of happiness is in the love of Truth with Reason; the love of Righteousness in *Life*; the love of Beauty with Feeling; and the love of *Good* in *Deed* . . . (Each person develops his own abilities in each area according to his own potentialities) with this (growth) we walk on the path to the knowledge of God." ¹⁵³

This leads to the statement by Hillel: "*Im ani kan, hakol kan*" ¹⁵⁴ "If I am here, everything is here."

If I, who can distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong intuitively, am here; if I, who can behold the beauti-

ful, am here; if I, who can behold the true, am here; then, *Hakol kan*. Then the Source of the Good, the Source of the Beautiful, the Source of the True is here.

For all this is not only within me. All this is not an hallucination. It is real. All this points to the Source of all reality. From myself—I see God.

“Makom” (Place), “Havayah” (Being)—this is the objective reality, the reality of the universe. But God is more than Being or Place. My subjective feelings show me that what I love, what I believe, what I want, these come to me from God. *I am a person*, in my love for truth, beauty, goodness. The Makom or Havayah supports me in my love for truth, beauty, goodness. If not, how did I get them? I am a person; therefore I have a personal God. My personal God is the Havayah and Makom of Reality.

In the words of the Psalmist:

Who made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein *is*: who keepeth truth for ever:

Who executeth judgment for the oppressed: who giveth food to the hungry. The Lord looseth the prisoners: The Lord openeth *the eyes of* the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous:

The Lord preserveth the strangers; he upholdeth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he subverteth.¹⁵⁵

NATURE OF MAN

What is Man?

A Modern Conception of Man

The Biblical Image of Man

Freedom and Sin

Is Death a Tragedy?

What is Man?

Our culture is firmly centered about psychology and psychiatry. Our private conversations and our novels are basically concerned with human personality development. Our stories on television, cinema screens, and the theatrical boards no longer emphasize plot, story, changing events; they pause and analyze motives, reasons, rationalizations, social background, family background; they project the camera inside the human mind and examine what makes us act the way we do.

This is not a newly found interest. The subject of greatest interest to man has always been man himself. The Bible and Greek drama were long ago interested in the human being and why he did the things he did. Ever since Freud, however, we have supposedly made a science out of the study of man and his psychology.

It is important for us as religious moral individuals to examine the theories about ourselves as people. Our major concern will not be psychology and psychiatry, but moral and religious behavior. We should be concerned about these areas of our life, if we seriously profess a loyalty to our religion. A consideration of the subject should give us deeper insight into ourselves, and help us live better Jewish lives and be happier human beings.

Man's Image of Himself

To anyone who has thought a little about the subject, psychology and ethics are evidently closely related. For what

you believe man is, influences what you believe he will do and should do. Your conception of what man is indicates how you want him to act and live. A theory of psychology must influence a theory of ethics. The Bible is concerned with ethics, what is good and bad; therefore it gets involved in human psychology. Our modern novelist or science-writer is concerned with psychology, and so ipso-facto he makes ethical judgments as well.

We must take seriously the pronouncements man makes about himself. They surely reveal as well as affect his basic behavior patterns. In pre-Nazi Germany, the following statement was frequently quoted: "The human body contains a sufficient amount of fat to make seven cakes of soap, enough iron to make a medium-sized nail, a sufficient amount of phosphorous to equip two thousand match-heads, enough sulphur to rid one's self of one's fleas." Probably there is a connection between this kind of statement and what the Nazis actually did to human beings.

The Communist view is that the goal of human life is the satisfaction of material wants. Human suffering is brought on by an inequitable distribution of goods and services. Therefore, the key to the human problem is economic, and the redistribution of these goods is proper and moral in order to achieve the ultimate: satisfaction of material wants. Hence, the Communist says, the end justifies the means.

The 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says: "Man is the seeker after the greatest degree of comfort for the least necessary expenditure of energy." This conception of man as a pleasure-seeking animal, which is the one portrayed in movies, television, and radio, would help explain why our teen-age delinquents seek to find "their greatest degree of comfort for the least expenditure of energy" in stealing, cheating, and lying. This definition would also help explain why delinquent adults believe they have achieved

success when they actually do possess the greatest degree of comfort with the least expenditure of energy.

We must realize that one's image of man is a very important thing. It represents by implication what a person is, what he can do, what he should do. It also implies the kind of society that person ought to live in; for there ought to be that kind of society which can nurture and develop this kind of man. Related is also the system of education which trains the man to become what he should be and assume his rightful place in that society. The kind of religion is also implied. It appears that a conception or image of ourselves is basic to our happiness and to our children's.

Our Image and Our Prayers

And the reason for knowing what we think of ourselves? As we proceed, it will become apparent that what we moderns think we are and how we should live is different from the Biblical conception of what man is and how he should live. Our prayers were written in a certain *milieu*, and were based upon the Bible and our Rabbinic tradition. Unless we are aware of the Biblical-Rabbinic conception of man, our prayers will not have full meaning for us and will not be related to us.

As an example, let us assume that the goal of human life is the satisfaction of material wants, and that all we want is the greatest degree of comfort with the least expenditure of energy. And then let us read the famous "*Ashamnu, Bagadnu, Gazalnu, Dibarnu Dofi*," the collective confession that follows the order of the Hebrew alphabet. "We have trespassed, we have dealt treacherously, we have robbed, we have spoken slander, we have acted perversely, we have scoffed (against whom?), we have done violence (against whom?), we have revolted (where and how?), we have re-

belled, we have been stiff-necked, we have corrupted, we have gone astray, we have led others astray.”

Unless we know the Biblical view of man and accept it, we cannot understand the meaning of this prayer and others. We cannot recite them with any degree of personal significance in terms of material wants or our ratio of comfort gained to energy expenditure.

The Bible teaches that God created man in his own image, and gave him the power of understanding and freedom. God also revealed to His chosen people His law, by which their lives individually and collectively are to be regulated. The Commandments were given to Israel as part of a Covenant with God into which the people of Israel freely entered. Faithful obedience to the Torah—this is the Biblical key to personal and social happiness.

God's will must be made known by instruction, and the foundation of all Jewish education is the Torah. The Commandments must be impressed upon the mind and heart. The study of sacred history makes vivid the drama of God's dealings with his people. Through group worship, solemn and joyous festivals, special ritual and *Mitzvos*, the essential meanings of Jewish life and the person's place in it are symbolically expressed and socially re-enforced. Unless a person accepts this, the recital of this prayer has no meaning.

How Should We Live?

Obviously, there is a tremendous difference between the two views of man: between the materialistic, pleasure-seeking conception, and the Biblical image. The truth of the matter is, there are *many* images of what man is and ought to be. This is part of the problem for modern man. There is a mixture of images; for different occasions in life, he assumes dif-

ferent images, as it suits him and as it fits his convenience.

We will focus our attention upon this basic difference. We will see how different are the popular images from the Biblical image of man. Only by knowing this difference can you choose to fulfill your highest destiny as a man, to serve the highest ideals in our civilization.

I am aware of the difficulties involved. We will always have people retort with this statement, "This is good, too—to each his own." My answer is "*Als hayst gelebt*," "Everything is living." The Eskimo in his primitive igloo, expending the major part of his animal energies upon the bare necessities of life, leaving little for the higher elements in human experience; the Communist citizen living a protected, sheltered life, politically centralized, mapped out for him by the Commissars of Industry, Music, Agriculture, and Education, almost every aspect of his life controlled and regulated; and we, living in a highly industrialized country where only a small fraction of our energies is needed to care for our basic necessities, and where there is a measure of freedom and choice to live our spiritual and cultural lives—all are "living."

The question is not, Where would you like to live? The Eskimo, I assume, would choose to live with his fellow Eskimos in the Arctic Zone, and the same for the Communist citizen. The question is, What kind of life is best for the human being? In what kind of society, with what ideals, and with what image of himself as a man, will he grow spiritually, ethically, and culturally? After we study the question, "What is Man?", we can clarify what kind of people we want to be, and what kind of country we would like to have.

We will also realize that the prayers we say should make sense to us only if we are the people we should be. If these prayers do not make sense to us, then we will know that we

are at fault, we are to blame, we have wandered off the path. Our prayers will then help us to get back on the highway of righteous living, and off the dirt path of “conditioned” aimlessness, pleasure, and doing what comes naturally.

Modern Conception of Man

The major image studiously portrayed in all advertising media is the complacent man. Let us discuss a bit his ideals, his habits, his manner of living.

The Pleasure-Principle

The complacent man, the modern man and his family, are governed by the *pleasure principle*. He is preoccupied in seeking pleasure, the maximum satisfaction of desires for food, drink, sex, worldly goods, physical well-being, creature comforts and luxuries, social success, and economic security. He is an epicurean. He believes, or is made to believe by Madison Avenue hucksters, that all life is governed by the *pleasure principle*.

He philosophizes thus: It is natural for every biological organism to seek the maximum satisfaction, and to avoid pain and what is unpleasant. Man's behavior follows this law of all living things. If man has a higher life than animals, it is only a more complex form of pleasure-seeking. Satisfying the needs of man here and now is holy; this is the essence of man's existence. The suppression or postponement of desire is considered a sin; it is unhealthy and sacrilegious. Man toils, works, slaves, gets ulcers, spares no effort to gratify his desires. No sacrifice is too great at the modern altar of physical gratification. *Needs* have become *gods*.

If we are thinking in this together, the question now arising in your mind is: There is nothing new in desire for pleasure, or satisfaction of our needs. All men in all times have wanted the good things in life, wanted a little more than food, shelter, and clothing. But is this really so?

Let us recall how our parents and grandparents lived. They worked hard, provided for their families, gave their children

a good education—this usually was their strongest wish—but they *postponed* their own pleasure seeking. Obviously, they were living in different times, and obviously they felt less need than we to keep up with their neighbors. They did not constantly need a new car, a new home, new furniture, new gadgets. They saved money, as their wants were simple, made investments, and bought property. Their basic desire was *acquisition*. They were capitalists. They earned and saved for *future* pleasure. They worked and saved for two generations: for themselves and for their children.

In great contrast, to our parents' drive for acquisition, our greatest need is for *consumption*. Why do we buy on installments? We want our pleasure here and now. We can't wait to save the money to buy what we want. We consume for two generations: for ourselves and for our parents.

Hayek, the Viennese economist and theoretician, was interested in offering a moral basis for capitalism. That socialism has a moral basis is obvious—cooperation, people helping each other, from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs. But what is the moral basis for profit? Hayek reasoned that capital comes from *postponed pleasure*. If a man has some capital, this means he has deprived himself of some pleasure and put away the money it would cost. This is a high moral quality involving self-control and discipline. If a person deprives himself of an immediate pleasure, he has the moral right to derive a gain later from the unspent money. Historically and geographically, capitalism developed in those countries where people believed in a *postponement* of pleasure, or that it is a sin to have too much pleasure. This was the Puritan ethic. It emphasized asceticism, thrift, and hard work. The ascetic Puritan ethic of production and acquisition has today given way to a hedonistic ethic in a consumer's society. But consumption is still guided by the

pleasure principle—body pleasure. There can be no higher motive—live to eat, live to consume.

This consumer's ethic is undermining our moral fiber. We consider wing-swept fins and tail lights on shining chrome cars more important for the national welfare than school buildings, of which we are suffering a great shortage, and more important than a scholarship fund for promising needy students, which was killed in Congress. We have wandered far away from the Biblical teaching that "man liveth not by bread alone," and have engaged in a campaign to enjoy pleasures and satisfy our lowest needs.

"They lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; they thrum to the sound of the psaltery, that devise for themselves instruments of music like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the costliest ointments; but they are not grieved for the hurt of Joseph." ¹⁵⁶

Man-Made Garden of Eden

In defense of what has happened to our moral character as a nation, an economic explanation is sometimes offered. Our present hedonistic morals have arisen out of our great economic wealth. We have a gross national annual production of 400 billion dollars. This vast economy is continuing to grow—must grow, if it is to give everybody employment. In America's industrial machine, efficiency increases about 4% every year; which means that the productive capacity of America doubles itself every twenty-five years—every generation. As our efficiency grows, and if we are not to have unemployment, then every increasing national product must be consumed. A way out of this dilemma is to deploy our

"liberated" personnel from production into services that will raise our cultural and spiritual level. This has been happening all along: more teachers, more artists, more poets, more rabbis, more physical therapists, more doctors and dentists. But as an organized proposal, this has not been accepted by the business community or by Madison Avenue.

Hence, we are locked in a remorseless chain reaction: more efficiency, more production, more consumption to keep full employment. As our technological Frankenstein continues to produce, we must continue to consume. We must learn new ways to consume. Consume or be consumed, is the slogan! This technological-economic situation has placed a big responsibility on Madison Avenue. Advertisers must convince America to consume more, to consume things it doesn't even need—like buying a new car while the present one is still in excellent condition. This is "psychological obsolescence"—needing what we do not really need.

And what stands in the way of this campaign to make us consume more, here and now? Our Biblical heritage! "Man does not live by bread alone"—man is *not* merely a pleasure-seeking animal. A man should be content with what he has, teaches our religion. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house . . . or anything that is thy neighbor's." This is our moral heritage. You don't judge a man by the big car he drives, but by the goodness and charity he displays in his relations. "Do not look upon his appearance or on the height of his stature . . . for the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."¹⁵⁷ It is our moral subconscious, our religious heritage, that modernism must defeat.

Dr. Ernest Dichter, president of the Institute of Motivational Research, is aware of the battle ahead of the Madison Avenue boys, and he is prepared to meet the challenge: "We are now confronted with the problem of permitting the

average American to feel moral even when he is flirting, even when he is spending, even when he is not saving, even when he is taking two vacations a year and buying a second and third car. One of the basic problems of this prosperity, then, is to give people the sanction and justification to enjoy it and to demonstrate the hedonistic approach to his life is a moral, not an immoral one. This persuasion given to the consumer to enjoy his life fully, the demonstration that he is right in surrounding himself with products that enrich his life and give him pleasure must be one of the central themes of every advertising display and sales promotion plan." ¹⁵⁸

The consequences of this campaign to undermine our moral-ethical heritage is being felt in many different ways, as we shall soon see. The most effective weapon to make out of Mr. and Mrs. America an amoral consumer is the supermarket. In the supermarket, Mr. and Mrs. America walk in man-made Gardens of Eden, a fabricated Isle of Paradise. In aisle after aisle, they find a variety of foods that in former years would have been unavailable even to kings and queens, but in this supermarket fairyland are available to all. In the supermarket, the ordinary American walks in a hedonistic, pleasure-seeking heaven. Here he finds the sanction to yield to his buying-spending-palate-tantalizing desires. It is a known fact that in a supermarket, impulse-buying is prevalent. The shoppers' buying list doesn't exist. You hear the housewife saying, "I certainly never *intended* to get that much." A duPont merchandiser pointed out that seven out of ten of today's purchases are decided upon in the store, on impulse. One Indiana supermarket operator estimates that any shopper could easily save 25% on family food costs by showing a little old-fashioned thoughtfulness and pre-planning, and writing up a shopping list. Why this takes place interested James Vicary, one of the leading M.R.'s

(motivational research men) and he undertook to find out.

He planted hidden cameras in a supermarket. His theory was that perhaps consumers underwent an increase in tension when confronted with so many possibilities, that they were forced into making quick-impulse purchases. His cameras photographed eye-blinking. According to Mr. Vicary, the average person normally blinks 32 times per minute; when tense, more frequently; under extreme tension, up to 50 to 60 per minute. If a person is relaxed, the blink rate drops to 20 or less per minute.

What he found was most surprising. The supermarket eye-blink rate, instead of going up as he expected, went down; to a sub-normal *14 blinks per minute*. The consumers were falling into a hypnotic trance, the first stage of hypnosis. Some had sort of a glassy stare. They were so entranced in this consumers' wonderland, as they wandered about in the aisles of paradise, that they just plucked things off the shelves at random; they would bump into boxes without seeing them, and did not even notice the cameras. When the consumers had filled the carts and started toward the check-out counter, their eye-blink rate would start rising upward to a sub-normal of 25 per minute. At the sound of the cash register ringing in their ears and the voice of the clerk, the eye-blink rate would race up past normal to a high of 45 per minute. This was the moment of reckoning.

If any one institution can characterize the modern American man, it is our supermarket. This consumers' institution faithfully reflects our self-indulgence, pleasure-seeking, materialistic way of life. The supermarket is modern man's answer to God's Garden of Eden. Modern man is revengefully saying to God: "You drove us out of your Garden of Eden, and caused us to work, saying, 'By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.' Now, we have made ourselves our own Garden of Eden, with all the latest appliances and modern conven-

iences. God, You drove us out of your Garden of Eden; now, we'll keep *You* out of *our* man-made Garden of Eden."

Hedonistic Religion

The danger to our spiritual and moral character comes from our growing absorption with consuming and pleasure-seeking, from our urge to experience a physical euphoria.

We are so far gone we are losing our sense of judgment; we are being carried along by a tide that is overwhelming us. Where is our sense of proportion if we become so quickly dissatisfied with last year's model?

What is happening to our youth? Surveys have been made by psychologists at Harvard University and Colby College, and among youth around the world: Italians, South Africans, Mexicans, and others. The youths were asked to describe their aspirations and to visualize their future.

What emerged, painfully clear, was the preoccupation of American youth with the material aspects of their existence to the exclusion of most other concerns. They knew pretty specifically the kind of life they wanted. They talked in terms of the hi-fi set they would have, the out-door barbecue, the game room, where they would take their first vacation, the kind of car they'd own, and so on. They showed little interest in making a career in public service, and little concern for their fellow man. Mexicans, in contrast, were aglow with idealism, and showed little concern for the material surroundings in their lives. Six times as many Mexicans as Americans foresaw that their greatest source of pride would be in service to their nation. And a majority said that helping others would be one of the goals of their life.

Even our own religion tends to become the apotheosis of all our complacency. The primary concern of our religion today has become our subjective feeling. Our religion too

has become saturated with hedonism: reflecting our whole way of life, it advertises itself as also satisfying the pleasure principle.

Religion has adjusted itself to the modern temper by proclaiming that it too is the satisfaction of a need. It fills a social need: "Come to our meeting and join us; you meet the real fine people in our community." It fills an emotional need: "Come to our services. The music is so soft and soothing; it relaxes you. The sermon is always peaceful, never upsetting. When I go to Temple, I always leave my worries there, and feel refreshed when I depart." From some of the Bar-Mitzvah parties and Confirmation parties parents are making these days, you get the impression that the primary need these affairs satisfy is not Jewish fraternity and joy of participating in a *Simchah Shel Mitzvah*, but the need of eating-pleasure and drinking-pleasure. Occasionally you attend a party where people have eaten and have imbibed "*uber die Mos.*" I've discovered a new phenomenon at these affairs—a *Yiddisher Shikker*.

Our religion has suffered from becoming an end in itself, to the exclusion of the holy and the divine. Our religion has become self-indulgent, self-seeking, as if its major task were not to correct, to elevate, to inspire, to ennoble the human being, but rather to cater to his needs, to enhance his status in society, to relax and entertain him.

Did the thunderous voice at Mount Sinai proclaim the Ten Commandments just to satisfy a human need? The people felt a need for a graven image—but that need was condemned. The hungry people felt need for the flesh-pots of Egypt—but God gave them spirit, not flesh. The people needed security in Egypt, but they were ordered to march into a desert.

The Bible never asks, "What does man need? What are man's needs and desires?" The Bible is rather a detailed answer to the eternal question: "O Man—what doth the Lord

require of thee?" Where modern life sees man as a fighter for needs, the Bible expects man to be a fighter for ends. The Bible expects man to be able to say "No" to himself, to be able to control his lust for satisfaction of desire, in the name of a higher demand and a higher expectation. The Bible expects man to be able to say "Yes" and respond *Hinaini*, "Here I am," to the commandments which come from God.

After Adam satisfied his need and ate the forbidden fruit, he hid himself, amongst the trees of the garden, from the presence of the Lord God. "And the Lord God called unto Adam and said to him: Where art thou? 'Ayekah?' " ¹⁵⁹ As we recline in comfort amid our prosperous suburban conveniences; as we are all happily engrossed in the time-consuming occupation of domestic life, with all the time-saving gadgets that make life "worth living"; as we leave our synagogues and churches, thinking smugly and complacently of how good and fine we are; as we sit in the comfortable homes with all the latest major appliances; as we savor our plush-soft-materialistic pleasure, we may hear a still small voice calling to us. If you listen carefully, you'll hear the voice of the Lord God calling to you: "Where art thou . . . *Ayekah?*"

"Awake, ye sleepers from your slumber, and rouse you from your lethargy. Scrutinize your deeds, and return in repentance. Remember your creator, ye who forgot eternal truth in the trifles of the hour, who go astray; and your lives after vain illusions which can neither profit nor deliver . . ." ¹⁶⁰

The Biblical Image of Man

We have seen how man's conception of himself as a pleasure-seeking animal is related to what he expects from life and to his whole manner and standard of living. Here we examine *the Biblical image of man* and see how this is related to other expectations and standards.

A Study in Contrasts

Let us begin with the famous passage in the 8th Psalm.

What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that Thou thinkest of him?
Yet Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels,
And hast crowned him with glory and honor.
Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of
Thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet.¹⁶¹

Here, the Bible enunciates that man is chief creature of the universe but little lower than the divine itself. In another passage, in the 144th Psalm, we learn an opposite view.

Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him?
Or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him?
Man is like unto a breath.
His days are as a shadow that passeth away.¹⁶²

A great Chassidic teacher taught these same contrasting views about the nature of man. He said that every Jew should carry two statements about him. In one pocket he should carry the inscription, "For my sake was the world created." *Bishvili nivra Ha-olam*.¹⁶³ In the other pocket should be this

inscription: "I am but dust and ashes." *V'anochi affar va-aifer*.¹⁶⁴ The "Rebbe" believed that man should think he is the lord of creation, the center point of the universe, about which rotates all reality in a homo-centric universe; and at the same time, man should think he is the most useless speck of sand in a trackless desert.

These contrasting ways in which man should think about himself are made very clear in the second chapter of Genesis, in the Bible account of man's creation. The Bible says: "Then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground."¹⁶⁵ The word *Adam*, man, comes from the Hebrew word *Adamah*, ground. "And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."¹⁶⁶ Pausing on the two phrases—"dust of the ground," and "breath of life," Rashi, the greatest of Biblical commentators, points out: "God made man from the upper and nether elements: the body from the nether elements and the soul from the upper elements."¹⁶⁷

According to the Bible, man is composed of body and soul. The body is from nature; the soul is from God. Man has in him the natural, instinctive elements. He is a child of nature like all other creatures of the animal kingdom. But man is also a child of God. He has in himself a divine spark, "the breath of life," "a living soul." In the first chapter, the *divine image* impressed in man is clearly presented. "And God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."¹⁶⁸ The Bible here teaches that man is created in the image of God. There is a quality in man which puts him above the animal, and above all other natural creatures, to enable man to have dominion over them. Man can have this dominion over nature because he is higher than nature.

We want to emphasize this Biblical teaching, which ought to be clear to every religious Jew. Man is both within nature

and above nature. Rashi confirms this basic insight into man's fundamental nature and presents this point upon the verse just quoted. In the verse which says, "Let us make man in our image . . . let him have dominion over . . . all the earth," Rashi pauses upon the word, *ve-yirdu*. The Hebrew connotes both *dominion* from the root word "R-D-H," and *descent* from the root word "Y-R-D," and so Rashi teaches us: "When man is worthy, he has *dominion* over the animal kingdom and all of nature; when he is unworthy, he *descends* below them and the animal instincts rule over him." ¹⁶⁹

If man is true to the Divine Image within himself, he may rule over nature; he may say: *Bishvili Nivra Ha-olam*, "For my sake was the whole universe created." But if man is unworthy of the "divine image" within him, of the "breath of life," the *nishmas chayim*, if he does not live up to the potentialities within him, if he is concerned only with pleasure, desires and needs, then the natural instincts rule over him, and man is reduced to dust and ashes. Man must rule over nature, or nature will rule over man and stamp out the divine spark within him.

Awareness of the Divine Image

This, then, is the basic Biblical view of man. Man is both a child of nature and a child of God. He has the physical instincts that all animals possess, *and* the spiritual potential that only man possesses.

Rabbi Akiva used to teach: "Beloved is man, for he was created in the image of God; it is by special divine love that man is *informed* that he was created in the image of God." ¹⁷⁰ The additional point of Rabbi Akiva is not in saying that man is created in the image of God; that man is a child of God, we know from the Bible. Rabbi Akiva's contribution is the *Chibba yesairah*, the special love through which man

is made *aware* that he is created in the divine image. Rabbi Akiva is expressing a basic ethical truth. It is not enough that man is created in God's image. That divine image can be destroyed through neglect, through the pursuit of pleasure, through worshipping our physical needs, through supermarket catering to our physical pleasure needs. Rabbi Akiva says: *Man must be aware* that he has this spiritual potential within him. The *Tzelem Elokim* must be cultivated, nurtured, or else it can be destroyed.

The fastest way of destroying man's "divine spark" is to *deny* that there is such a spark in man, to deny that it must be nurtured, to deny that spiritual activities must strengthen it.

The first step to rekindle the divine spark, the divine image in man, is to be cognizant that it is within us. With Rabbi Akiva, we must become *aware* that we are created in the *divine image*, and then seek out a daily discipline to rehabilitate and revive it.

Three Definitions of Man's Nature

In western culture there are three major ways, with very minor variations, of looking upon man's inner nature and his essential character. One is the materialistic view of man. An over-simplified formula would put it this way: man-body. The science of biology accepts this approach toward man, that he is only a child of nature. All students in the related fields of study take their cue from this basic science. Kinsey was a professor of zoology, a field in biology, and he studied animals all his life. When he studied men and women and wrote about his findings as a professor of zoology, he entitled his two major works, *The Sexual Behavior of the American Human Male* and *The Sexual Behavior of the American Human Female*. He described his findings as he would the

sexual behavior of the house fly or mosquito. Man-body: this approach toward the human being is that man is of the animal genus and human species. The wisest of men in Ecclesiastes put it, as the Bible says: "A man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." ¹⁷¹ This utterance actually contradicts the Bible; it is uttered in a mood of scepticism. Because people accept this view that man is nothing more than body, we get novels like *Peyton Place* and *Lolita*; our youth read the smut, and then aspire to find happiness in the same physical manner.

In great contrast to the view of man just presented, and many times in revulsion and disgust at the kind of life this materialistic view implies, there is the ascetic view of man. The simple formula is: man-soul. Believing that the body is the source of all corruption, evil, debauchery, contamination, this view seeks to suppress the body, to deny and stifle it. Man must only develop the soul. This is the ideal of celibacy, of monasticism; it is the ideal of the Nazirite, as the Bible says: ". . . to separate *oneself* unto God." ¹⁷²

From the Biblical view, both concepts are equally sinful; both truncate man, deprive him of his complementary side; both are cognizant of only a part of man. The Bible opposes both the materialism of man-body and the asceticism of man-soul. The Bible proposes instead a healthy spirituality: man-body and soul. Man is both a child of God and a child of nature.

Body and Soul

To best see how the Biblical view of man is not merely theory, but actually works out in practice, let us examine the Biblical conception of marriage, as the rabbis interpret it.

The first commandment in the Bible is procreation—perpetuate the human race. "And God blessed them and God

said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." ¹⁷³ Procreation is part of the divine plan. But sexual gratification in itself, as a pleasurable experience in marriage, is also commanded by the Bible. Basing themselves upon the verse, "He shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights," ¹⁷⁴ the Rabbis forbid either spouse to withhold normal sexual gratification in marriage. Resolving the matter, the Rabbis recommend various frequencies depending upon one's health and occupation.¹⁷⁵

Basic to this whole viewpoint is that man is physically in the animal world. Nowhere does the Bible question this basic truth. But the laws of the Bible seek to keep man *also* devoted to his divine spark. That man has an animal—natural—level is accepted in the Bible. But that man has also a spiritual nature, the Bible will not permit us to forget.

The Bible wants man to be true to his total being—to his body *and* his soul. Therefore, the Rabbis, in recognizing the physical pleasures essential for a happy marriage, always stressed the spiritual side of marriage. Rabbi Akiva taught: "When husband and wife are worthy, the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) is with them." ¹⁷⁶ Some attribute this teaching to his disciple, Rabbi Meir. Let us recall that both Rabbis were deeply in love with their wives, and the Talmud takes the effort to tell us about their love affairs with their wives. As Rashi comments, *Ish* has the *yud*; *Isha* has the *hay*, hence "Yud-Kay," God's name is in their midst. When unworthy, when they forget their divine spark, the Image of God which is theirs, they lose the "Yud and hay" and reduce to "Aish" and "Aish" (fire). They are consumed by their own destructive fire, as they also destroyed their divine spark within them.

The Jewish ideal of marriage is to permit each Jewish couple to realize to the full its own potential—on both physical and spiritual levels.

The Biblical ideal is one of balance and blending of the

physical and the spiritual, not one at the expense of the other. The Biblical ideal opposes the muscle-bound athlete, the pleasure loving hedonist seeking physical gratification, and the undernourished, ascetic mystics denying the flesh. The Bible ideal proposes the equal development of body and soul.

Rav Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of modern times in Israel, believed that as one strengthens the physical aspect of existence, one potentially also strengthens the spiritual aspect of existence. "One can strengthen the soul . . . in the chambers of the flesh . . . As one strengthens the life of the body . . . one enlarges and strengthens with this also the shrine of the Soul." ¹⁷⁷ Rav Kook saw no conflict between the body obedient to God's law and the soul. He went so far as to say: "Spirituality is not improved in our generation without the fulfillment of the bodily attributes." ^{177a}

The modern conception of man is guided by the pleasure principle, seeking ever to fulfill newly discovered needs in complete neglect of his spiritual-cultural inheritance. In contrast, the Biblical image of man, suggests that man ought to participate in the legitimate activities which will give healthy expression to both physical and spiritual instincts. The Biblical image of man has no quarrel with the modern sciences that seek to help man liberate himself from oppression, prejudice, ignorance. But it must oppose the cultural forms in our society which enslave the human being and smother his spirituality.

In the opening passages in the Torah, the Torah announces the purpose and manner for man to live on this earth. Man has a mandate from God to live as a child of nature and as a child of God ruling over nature. This mandate he has, as long as man lives in the universe under God.

Freedom and Sin

The Bible does not underestimate man, his stature, his place in God's creation, or his abilities. The Bible sees in man the child of God, created in the image of God. We have described man's image in spiritual terms, and have explained *when* man may be considered to be but little lower than the divine.

Freedom and Choice

Let us go a little deeper into the Biblical-Rabbinic image of man. The Bible posits that the ability to know good and evil, to distinguish and choose between the two, is a divine ability. As the serpent said, when he tried to convince Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge . . . "Your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil."¹⁷⁸ After Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge, the Lord God said, "Behold, the man is become one of us to know good and evil."¹⁷⁹ The Aramaic translation of the Bible by Acquilla puts it more distinctively. "Behold, the man is unique in the universe to know good and evil."^{179a} Rashi, commenting upon this verse ("Behold, man is become one of Us"), follows Acquilla's Aramaic translation and expounds upon man's uniqueness. Rashi says: "He is unique among the terrestrial beings as I am unique among the celestial beings—and what is his uniqueness? To know good and evil, which is impossible for animal and beast."^{179b} The Bible and its commentaries point out that one aspect of man's nature is his ability to know good and evil; this ability is considered a "God-like" quality.

To be created in the image of God, then, also means to know good and evil. Implied in this knowledge is the ability to *choose* between good and evil. This is an essential part of man—his freedom.

It is a debatable point among theologians whether man obtained his knowledge of good and evil against the will of God, through disobedience; or if God granted man his freedom willingly and graciously as implied in being created in the image of God. I favor the latter view. That man is free and can choose between good and evil is a "God-like" quality, God-granted.

To be created in the image of God, to sum up, means that man's essence is spiritual, part of him being above nature; and that he is *free*.

The Tension in Choice

One of the great Talmudic Rabbis, Shimon, son of Pazi, saw in man's freedom a remarkable clash. He expounds upon a Biblical verse, "Then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground."¹⁸⁰ Why is the word *Vayitzer* written with two "Yuds"? Said Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, "Woe to me from my Creator and woe to me from my nature": *Oy li mi-yotzri v'oy li miyitzri*. This is a pun on two homonyms, *yotzri* and *yitzri*, "my Creator" and "my inclination." There is the ever-present tension in every moral choice between good and evil. Do I follow my *yotzer*, my Creator, and choose good? Or do I follow my *yetzer*, my inclination, and choose evil?¹⁸¹ What in Freudian terms has been described as the conflict between the id and the alter-ego, according to Reb Shimon ben Pazi is a conflict between the *yotzer* and the *yetzer*. Sin is the choice a free man makes to reject the call of his Creator and hearken instead to his inclination.

The Choice Between "Yotzer" and "Yetzer"

We can use the other terms: "child of God" and "child of nature." There is the conflict within man whether to listen

to the child of God or the child of nature. The Bible is filled with conflicts between these two aspects of man.

The people of Israel are thirsty in the desert. They want water. God tells Moses to speak to the rock. The Bible says: "And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said unto them, 'Hear now, ye rebels; are we to bring you forth water out of this rock?'" ¹⁸² This incident shows the old, patient shepherd losing his temper and insulting his sheep. The loyal and simple King Saul forgets the order of the prophet Samuel not to take of the wealth of the Amalakites, when in a successful war he captures much booty. "But Saul and the people had pity on Agog, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, even the young of the second birth, and the lambs, and all that was good, and moved not to destroy them." ¹⁸³ The temptation for the war booty was stronger than the Lord's commandment not to derive a profit from this war.

David was the sweet singer of Israel, the author of Psalms, the profoundest religious poetry in the world. Yet the Bible says: "And it came to pass at eventide, that David arose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said: 'Is not this Bath-Sheba, the daughter of Elaim, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?' And David sent messengers and took her; and she came unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness; and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, 'I am with child.'" ¹⁸⁴ The greatest of religious poets could not control his *yetzer*.

"And David said unto Nathan: 'I have sinned against the Lord.' This was the conflict within man: "Woe unto me if I heed my inclinations (instincts), for then I offend my

Creator; woe unto me if I heed my Creator, for then I offend my instincts, my desires.”¹⁸⁵ Sin is man’s neglecting God’s commandments and turning to satisfy his temptations.

The Conflict within Man.

Rav Nachman ben Chisdah is more humanistic in his approach to this tension between the two aspects in man. According to Rav Nachman this is not a conflict between *yotzri*, ‘my Creator,’ and *yitzri*, ‘my inclination.’ Rav Nachman says, “Man was created with two natures; one is the good inclination and one is the evil inclination.”¹⁸⁶ The conflict is between two aspects in man.

Reb Yosee from Galilee taught: “The *Tzadikim*, the righteous, have mastered self-control; they have their desires in their power. But the *Resha-im*, the wicked, are in the power of their desires.”¹⁸⁷ According to Reb Yosee, a good man is one who has trained his instincts with constant effort and has them under control. His *Yetzer Hatov*, or good inclination, will usually have the upper hand.

The evil man is one who has not trained his instincts with constant prayer, study, good deeds, and self awareness. In this man, the *Yetzer Hara*, the evil drive, is more powerful, and in a moment of decision will be victorious. According to Reb Yosee, whether behavior is moral or immoral is a matter of training, effort, and spiritual awareness.

More About Sin

Thus far we have examined the kind of sinfulness that is called lust. This is a natural-biological kind of sinfulness, which comes from man’s animal nature.

The Bible mentions a more devious and tricky kind of sinfulness, and therefore more dangerous.

This is the sin of pride. The Bible relates that men once

sought to dethrone God. This was their sin of pride and independence. "And they said, 'Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name.' " ¹⁸⁸ Rashi, basing himself upon earlier rabbinic explanations, suggests: "They came with a unanimous opinion, and they said: 'It does not rest with God to choose the celestial sphere for Himself and assign the earth to us. Let us, then, make war against Him.' " ¹⁸⁹ Here is the essence of the sin of pride. Man tries to be like God, or to be independent of God. Both forms of sinfulness, lust and pride, imply *disobedience*. But in the disobedience stemming from lust, man is carried away by his animal desire. In pride, it is a higher nature in man that asserts itself. Here it is his very freedom, his power of choice, his ability to know good and evil, that perversely incite man to become independent of God. Freedom itself turns man's head and fills him with pride. The Prophet Isaiah describes the boastful pride of a powerful ancient monarch, the King of Assyria, and gives us further insight into the sin of pride: "When the Lord has finished all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will punish the arrogant boasting of the King of Assyria and his haughty pride."

For He says:

By the strength of My hand I have done it,
And by My wisdom, for I have understanding;
I have removed the boundaries of peoples,
And have plundered their treasures.

Like a bull I have brought down those who sat on
thrones.

My hand has found like a nest
The wealth of the peoples;
And as men gather eggs that have been forsaken
So I have gathered all the earth;

And there was none that moved a wing,
Or opened the mouth, or chirped.¹⁹⁰

The Prophet Ezekiel presents us with the posturings of another wealthy and influential monarch, The King of Tyre.

Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the

Lord God:

Because your heart is proud
And you have said, I am god,
I sit in the seat of the gods,
In the heart of the seas,
Yet you are but a man, and no god,
Though you consider yourself as wise as a god . . .
By your wisdom and your understanding
You have gotten wealth for yourself
And have gathered gold and silver
In to your treasuries;
By your great wisdom in trade
You have increased your wealth,
And your heart has become proud in your wealth.¹⁹¹

But Moshe Rabbenu emphasizes that the sin of pride is not limited only to great monarchs and kings and princes. All simple people who have tasted the satisfaction of achievement are open to the sin of pride: "Beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His ordinances, and His statutes, which I command thee this day. Lest when thou hast eaten and art satisfied, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein, and thou say in thy heart: My power and might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth." ¹⁹²

When man forgets God, or seeks to be independent of him, he commits the sin of pride and ingratitude.

Freedom: The Grandeur of Man

Man's sinfulness can come only from his freedom. Because man is created in the image of God, with a spiritual nature and the ability to choose good or evil, he experiences the conflict between his two natures, the *Yetzer Hatov* and *Yetzer Hara*, or between the desire to please his Yetzer, inclination, or the desire to please his Yotzer, his Creator. Man has a choice: Obey God or disobey God. "Behold I set before thee this day a blessing and a curse; the blessing if you should hearken unto the Commandments of the Lord Your God, which I command you this day." ¹⁹³

This is the grandeur of man. Throughout the centuries, up to modern times, man considered himself the captain of his fate and was free to map out his course. The painting of Michelangelo depicting God creating Adam, found on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, portrays the full grandeur of the man of choice and freedom, the man of decision. The artist is depicting spiritual grandeur in the beauty of the body as it is being touched by God. But with the modern science of man, this Biblical view of man has changed.

Determinism in Modern Social Thought

Darwin, Marx, and Freud, at least as popularly understood, took away man's dignity, his choice, and his freedom. Darwin implies that man is not a unique creature made in God's image, but a biological specimen. Marxism expounds on historical materialism: all man's life, he says, is determined by the material forces in his environment, and the economic mode of production determines man's cultural and spiritual life. Freudian psychology continues this pattern of making man dependent upon psychological and emotional forces beyond his control.

According to these modern points of view, man has little freedom, little choice, and almost no decision. "Natural selection" has caused man to evolve from other forms of life; "dialectical materialism" has similarly evolved the whole social-cultural life of man; and the unconscious hidden drives in man actually direct the person. Man is completely at the mercy of the biological, sociological, and psychological forces beyond his control.

The net result of the popular interpretation of these scientific theories is to see man in the image of an animal or a machine; his divine image has been blotted out. Man is no longer the free being he has always thought he is. His life is fully determined for him.

Now, if man loses his freedom, he also loses the stigma of sin. Man cannot logically be held responsible for behavior beyond his control, choice, or decision. Man today has been encouraged to look upon himself as the product of heredity and environment, if not their victim, and therefore to be exonerated of all misdemeanors and relieved of all responsibilities. These modern sciences of man have rightly been called "philosophies of exculpation." By them, man cannot sin, for there is no such thing as the choice to sin or not to sin. Man is rather the victim of heredity and environment.

Losing the right to choose and to decide is pleasant, because man finds protection in losing his responsibility and accountability. No longer possessing freedom and choice, he acts as a member of a group. Being taught and trained in schools to believe in the impossibility of choice and decision, his decision making powers atrophy; he loses the power to choose, because he is convinced that he cannot choose. He'd rather not decide, and leaves decision to others: or takes part in a decision where nobody really decides but yet a decision is made through a group process. The market researchers rest upon the principle of the invincibility of the popularity poll.

After sufficient "sampling" has been taken, a *decision* is made by the group, based upon the findings of the poll. This is the modern man.

Is it any wonder that we live today in an atmosphere of irresponsibility, of unwillingness to face up to issues and decisions? Our intellectual environment breeds moral irresponsibility. Teen-agers don't think for themselves, they follow the crowd. Parents move in packs, and everybody follows everybody else.

The Biblical Image of Man

Without debating the validity of the modern interpretations of our three social thinkers, Darwin, Marx, and Freud, it must be evident to all that a moral order cannot exist without individual responsibility resting upon free choice and decision. Morality, character, and other virtues such as honesty, effort, and so on, require at least the illusion of moral choice, decision, and moral responsibility. To train our children, to give them character, to teach them morality, we must raise them upon the Biblical image of man which emphasizes freedom and sin. They must be taught what is good and what is evil, and that *they* must choose between the two and face the consequences of their choice. Parents must take a stand: this is good, this is evil. We either possess the God-like quality of knowing good and evil, or we descend into the level of the beast for whom this distinction does not exist.

To complete the Biblical image of man, we must add the concept of repentance to those of freedom and sin. Man has freedom to choose and freedom to sin, to disobey God. But he is also free to repent, to return to God and ask for forgiveness. We say in our liturgy of Yom Kippur: "We have acted wickedly and have transgressed; wherefore we have not been saved. Oh, incline our hearts to forsake the path of evil and

hasten our salvation.”¹⁹⁴ We can choose, we can make the decision. We need not follow the majority, who will do the same thing next year as they did last year. “. . . Let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for He is ever ready to pardon.”¹⁹⁵

Our religion teaches us: God is always ready to receive the penitent. God does not want the destruction of the sinner.¹⁹⁶ He asks us to return to Him, *willingly*, of our own free will, and try to live as children of God, created in the image of God.

Is Death a Tragedy?

In attempting to answer our question, "Is death a tragedy?," we shall get a deeper understanding of the Biblical image of man.

Clarifying the Question

Let us begin with a common sense approach. A little girl has a kitten as a play companion to which she becomes attached. One day the kitten is killed by a passing car. The child sees the dead kitten in the street and runs crying to pick it up. A stream of tears running down her face, she goes to her back yard to bury the kitten. For a few days she mourns the death of her pet. Is this death a tragedy?

If this were just another alley cat killed by a passing car, there would be a very simple answer. An alley cat is just one more animal among millions and the death of an alley cat is no tragedy. Similarly, about the thousands of cattle, fish, and fowl killed every day, there is no question to most people that this is as it should be: they are the food supply for human beings. But this kitten, the companion of the child, is different. This child had such pleasant associations with the cat. She projected *herself*, her own human qualities, into the life of the cat. She endowed her cat with anthropomorphic qualities. To the child, the cat was almost human.

If you tried to dissuade the child from crying and mourning, she would think you were brutal. "My kitten had feelings just like you and I," she would say. And the child did behold in the cat feelings of love, kindness, friendliness, anger, cleanliness, enthusiasm, listlessness, hate, and so on.

Since the child humanized the animal, it was a tragedy for the child to find her cat dead. For sophisticated adults, there could be no tragedy in the death of a pet, or in the death of any animal.

For the same reason, there is no tragedy when a machine breaks down and is no longer useful. When a tractor or automobile gets old and useless and is thrown upon the scrap heap, is that a tragedy? Of course not! Accepting our common sense judgment, tragedy cannot occur with inanimate objects. Take the most complicated digital computer, which can "think." After a few years, more advanced digital computers are manufactured. Would it be a tragedy to scrap this lovely, useful I.B.M. computer, or would you put "him" or "it" on unemployment insurance and let "him" or "it" live out his years? A tragedy can occur only with a human being, only to a being that has self-consciousness. A mother, *Lo alainu*, has a still-birth. Is that tragic for the dead baby? For the still-born infant it is no tragedy. That baby is only a lump of protoplasm. It is tragic for the mother who carried the baby for nine months, but then gave birth to protoplasm—not a living baby.

People sometimes say, "That was a tragic waste of material." "War is a tragic waste of material and resources." The tragedy involved, even with the resources and material, is in their relationship to people. The tragedy is not in the billion barrels of oil wasted on reconnaissance and bombings, but rather in the peaceful pursuits the billion barrels of oil could have been used to bring human happiness. The tragedy was in their misuse *as far as people are concerned*. This brings us to a second quality in tragedy. The event must have some significance to somebody involved in it or related to it.

To say that some event is tragic, there must be self-consciousness and significance in meaning. The event must have happened to a self-conscious person who comprehends significance and meaning. If the person cannot raise the problem of significance or meaning, there is no tragedy. A boy loses his young father in an accident. The son or his friends

ask, "Why? Why did it happen?" Thus they raise the question of meaning and significance.

Usually, the belief in God or in some orderly universe where the system rests upon righteousness and justice, will intensify the feeling of tragedy. To raise the question, "Why did it happen?" implies that according to some accepted concept of law, justice, or righteousness, it should *not* have happened. It is only because the event seems capricious, without rhyme or reason, does the event have tragic significance.

Tragedy can only occur in an orderly universe governed by God or moral law. If we lived in a universe where there is no law or justice, a world where anything may be expected or could happen, we would not be shocked if a healthy young man is brutally killed on a highway. We would not consider this event to be a tragedy. It is only because we live in an orderly, lawful universe that such an event seems tragic.

If we say that the arbitrary death of a human being is tragic, we accept these presuppositions:

1. The human being has self-consciousness.
2. There is God or a universe governed by moral law.
3. Because of these two, there is a quest for meaning, or significance or purpose. Why did it happen?

Now, we are ready for a tentative answer to our question: Death is a tragedy provided it happens to a self-conscious person in an orderly universe governed by moral law or God, and when the occurrence cannot make sense, or have any significance or meaning to the family and friends concerned.

Death—Tragedy or Natural Event?

For modern thought, death is not tragedy. Just as it is not tragic for a cow to die, neither is it for a human being. The human being is just another animal, and expendable like any animal. To the family who gets "wrapped up" in one

another, and believes in love, mind and soul, the modern science of man insists that these are all illusions, self-deceptions.

If the whole universe, including man, evolved as one great series of coincidences, why should anyone expect justice or plan or system? Human beings are governed by the same impersonal, natural laws as the whole universe. If there is no order, there can be no question, "Why?" and hence no tragedy. Is not this the explanation one gets at homes during *Shivah*? Death is a natural event; sickness is a natural event—cancer, blood clots, thrombosis.

There is no purpose, hence no tragedy. If there is no ultimate meaning to the universe, there is no meaning to any part or event in it. If the universe is meaningless, then what occurs in it is meaningless. There are illusions like music, poetry, literature, mathematics, and science that seem to discover some meaning in parts of the universe. But these are fleeting dreams about reality, and objectively they have no real existence.

To make the same point, from a religious basis: if there is no God, there can be no tragedy. To whom do we cry? Why the tears? Why the wailing? What else can you expect from a chance universe without God? Why did it happen? Why should it *not* have happened? Why did a happy marriage end so suddenly with the death of a young mother? Why should it *not* have happened when she had a congenital heart condition?

If there is a self-conscious person involved, who loved and helped and understood and responded and hoped and prayed—if such a being dies, it is a tragedy. If there is purpose, and plan, and order, and meaning to everything that happens, why did this person die? If there is a God, why did it happen? There is the tragedy.

If man is not truly man, but only a more intelligent animal

with a more complex brain, death is not a tragedy. If there is no God or moral order to the universe, death is no tragedy. If there is no meaning in the universe, or in any part of it, there is no tragedy. If man is not a self-conscious individual who knows good and bad, who can love, create, and be compassionate, death is not a tragedy. Death is only a natural event.

Because we believe that man is self-conscious, because we believe in a moral universe and in God, and a meaning to life, to existence, therefore we do find death a great tragedy. Because we believe all this, *we find life itself tragic*. Why do the virtuous suffer and the sinful prosper? Why, apparently, is there suffering and pain for humanity? Why are there capricious events in our experience which do not fit into a moral, orderly universe? Because we believe in values and believe that our universe sustains and supports human values, we are upset and disillusioned when we find events that go contrary to our value system, taught by our Torah and representing the best in the western tradition.

How May We Rise Above Tragedy?

This leads us to our next problem. If we believe that death is a tragedy, how can we rise above this tragedy or even overcome it? What does our Jewish religion teach us? We all know the answer: immortality, life after death. But we have little appreciation of what the answer truly is. Let's not be glib about the answer. Let us proceed slowly, step by step.

Fulfillment Lessens Tragedy

If a man lived more than his three score and ten years, raised a fine family who brought "*naches*" to the father and mother, left an honest name in all his business relations, respected by his associates and friends; rendered service to

his community and synagogue, and was charitable to all worthy institutions—then this man lived a full life. When he died, we can apply to him the verse in Ecclesiastes, “A time to be born and a time to die.”¹⁹⁷

When a man has fulfilled his potential upon this earth, it is truly “a time to die.” On the other hand, when a person is in the middle of his career, with young children and a wife, and this young man dies, it is truly tragic. This person has not fulfilled his potential, all the inherent ability waiting to be expressed.

For this reason, the Rabbis taught: “Someone is born; everybody is happy. Someone dies, everybody cries. It should not be this way. Rather, if a person is born, no occasion for joy, because no one knows what will be the future of the infant, a *Rasha* or *Tzadik*, good or bad. When he dies, they ought to be happy, because he dies with a good name and leaves the world in peace.”¹⁹⁸

If a person fulfilled his purpose, he fit into the orderly plan of God’s universe and gave more meaning to life. When that person dies, it is not a tragedy because that is the plan, that is the order. “When Rabbi Yochanan concluded the Book of Job, he said: ‘The end of man is death; and the end of cattle is slaughter; and everything is designated for death. Blessed is he that has been reared in the Torah, and who toiled in the Torah, acts so as to please his Creator, and has grown up with a good name and departed with a good name! Concerning him Solomon said, “The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.”’ ”¹⁹⁹

It was a great tragedy when a brilliant student did not fulfill his promise: he became a mediocre school teacher when he had the ability to become a research scientist. This man then lived to the ripe old age of 85 years. In all his days he never performed any unusual tasks. Although he was blessed with good health and long life, he accomplished very

little. This was a tragic life indeed. This person wasted his brilliant mind reading detective stories.

Fulfillment decreases tragedy; lack of fulfillment increases tragedy. If a person lived to the fullest ability within himself and brought more value into the lives of his human circle, although he may have left prematurely, he fulfilled his purpose upon earth. It is this realization which lessens the tragedy or helps us to rise above it.

The Human Values Live On

We may also rise above tragedy in the realization that the ideals for which the person gave himself will continue to live after death. Our Rabbis have said: "Jacob our father did not die. As his children live on, he also lives on." ²⁰⁰ Rashi comments that the children followed their father. The individual gave his life for certain ideals, institutions or causes; as these live on, or as the family devotes itself to the same causes, the purpose which was uppermost in the life of the deceased also lives. This helps to raise the living above their tragedy.

A Limit to Man's Understanding

Job was concerned with his own personal family tragedy. Believing in a moral universe and in God, in a purpose and meaning to events, Job could not comprehend what happened. Why did he suffer? Why was he afflicted? He stood his ground. He did not admit to his own sinfulness or impiety. He stormed at the heavens and sought an explanation. By challenging God's justice, Job did not change anything. Job only learned, after much anguish, that *God has imposed limits upon man's ability to comprehend the moral nature of the universe.* That there is a moral order, Job did not question; that there is human suffering which contradicts this order, he knew from personal experience; he had to ac-

cept on faith that there is purpose and plan beyond human knowledge, and meaning beyond suffering.

If Job rejected the order, because of human suffering, he would be throwing out the baby with the bath; as it was, Job wanted the baby, so he accepted the bath on faith. Our teachers in the Mishnah therefore proposed this Jobian doctrine. "A man must offer a blessing over evil just as he pronounces a blessing over good . . . with whatever measure He metes out to you, do you give thanks unto Him."²⁰¹ Therefore this teaching: Rav Huna said in the name of Rav who said it in the name of Reb Meir, "A man should always be prepared to say 'All that the Merciful One does, He does for the good.'"²⁰²

To emphasize the Jobian doctrine of faith in God which goes beyond man's understanding, the Talmud relates this *Mashal*.

"It once happened that R. Akiva was traveling over the country and had with him a donkey, a rooster, and a lamp. At night he reached a village where he sought lodging for the night, but it was refused. 'All that God does, He does for the good,' was his comment. He proceeded toward the forest where he resolved to spend the night. A lion came and ate up his donkey; a cat came and devoured the rooster; and wind came and extinguished the lamp. 'All that God does, He does for the good,' he said. That same night a band of robbers came and attacked the village. Then R. Akiva said, 'Didn't I tell you, all that God does, He does for the good?' "

Rashi explains the details, left out by the cryptic *Mashal* in the Talmud: the robbers passed R. Akiva in the forest that night; if the donkey had brayed, if the rooster had crowed, or if the robbers had seen the light, Akiva would surely have met death.^{202a}

Ultimately, man *must* make his peace with the nature of things. There is no stoic spirit of resignation in this view.

In stoicism, this attitude assumes a capricious universe without a God; the spirit is inherently *pessimistic*. Whereas, blending one's will with the divine will of the universe and believing that all works out for the good, fills one with *optimism* and joy.

This is the religious mood when the mourner recites the Kaddish: "Yisgadal Veyiskadash Sh'may Rabbah"—"Praised and sanctified be His Great name." Even in death, man rises above tragedy to see the orderly universe of God, and the Father of all being. There is a mystic realization that truly this is the will of God that one accepts without murmur. As one blesses and thanks God for the good, one must also bless and thank God for the evil. Death is evil, but in God's divine nature of things, death has its purpose too. This we accept on faith, reassured just as other events have their purpose, so must death in the Divine Plan.

Soul

Now let us return to self-consciousness, that quality which makes us truly human. Self-consciousness is a mystery. I am aware of myself as you are of yourself. This is the essence of what we mean when we say, "I." In the whole universe this aspect of reality is about the only thing we can definitely be sure about. Whatever is, we get to know about through our own private system of knowledge. Where is our knowledge located and how does it come into being? The mind has been and still is a vast mystery to all scientists.

Julian Huxley, a great biologist, wrote, "The miracle of mind is that it can transmute quantity into quality. This property of mind is something given: it is just so. It cannot be explained: it can only be accepted."

One of the principles of science is that anything is an illusion unless it can be measured and experimented with, as is done in the natural sciences or in dealing with mechanical

phenomena. But self-consciousness is not a quantity but a quality. The laboratory technician cannot measure self-consciousness or the intricate functions of the mind, because, as Huxley says, this is a quality, not a quantity. It cannot be explained: it can only be accepted."

Self-consciousness is only the beginning of the awareness for the soul. Obviously, we are dealing with a kind of reality that all of scientific technique, thus far, is incapable of measuring and verifying. Even more than the mind, the soul cannot be explained: it can only be accepted. The religious-Jewish answer to the tragedy of the death is the immortal soul. We believe that the soul is immortal, the essence of man that never dies. After fulfillment in the life in the body, the soul seeks fulfillment and purpose in a life without the body. Belief in the Immortal Soul is the Jewish answer to death—for in truth there is no death; only the body dies, but the soul lives on with God.

Is death a tragedy? It is a tragedy only if man is self-conscious and if the universe is governed by moral law and order. Man can rise above tragedy if he finds fulfillment in this world; leaves a heritage of human value which lives on; has faith in God that all He does is for the good; and believes in an Immortal Soul.

A MORAL PURPOSE TO LIFE

The Moral Purpose to Life
Whither Art Thou Going?
The Reward of Virtue
The Unconditioned Ethic
Contentment and Peace

The Moral Purpose to Life

Social behavior is regulated by what is right and what is wrong. No society can function without teaching its members, through its various institutions, what is desirable conduct and what is undesirable. A large area of human behavior, for instance, is governed by law, legislated or imposed by the sovereign authority. The government indicates what is desirable or undesirable for its people through laws which are enforced by the sanction of government power or prestige. A larger area of our behavior is controlled by ethics: attitudes and values without any sanction of force, but which carry the prestige and authority of the religious, moral, intellectual institutions in the community. Law and ethics overlap, and give each other support. A legal system which is not ethical cannot long expect the cooperation of the people; an ethical system relies upon the sanction of the state to give it authority and support.

The area of ethics is as vast as life itself. There are ethical and moral standards in all relationships: within the family between father and son, brother and brother, husband and wife; within business between buyer and seller, between seller and seller; within manufacturing between employer and employee, between employer and employer, and between employee and employee; within a profession between the professional and his client, and among the professionals themselves; between one class and another, between nations, between religions, between races, and so on. These vast areas of social, economic, and political activity are considered by many to be beyond the realm of ethics—areas where only

Machiavellian considerations of power and force are to be reckoned with. Reinhold Neibuhr, wrote an important book, *Moral Man, Immoral Society* elaborating this thesis. Even if these vast realms were influenced by ethical considerations, they can be swayed only by mass groups acting in concert.

As in all these essays, I address myself to *individuals*, and the ethics and morality I shall discuss are strictly person-to-person. Three categories will be analyzed: (1) Man and his fellow men; (2) Man and his things; and (3) Man and himself.

The Classic Jewish View

Classic Jewish ethics began with the assumption that life has a moral purpose. What makes life worthwhile? What makes life a worthy endeavor and effort? The answer: its moral purpose. The great 18th century Italian thinker, Moses Chayim Luzzatto, expressed this viewpoint very clearly in his classic *Mesillas Yesharim, The Path of the Upright*. "What constitutes man's duty in this world, and what goal is worthy of his endeavors throughout all the days of his life?" He answers: "Man is put here (in this world) in order to earn with the means at his command the place that has been prepared for him in the world to come."²⁰³ In support of this classic view he presents Talmudic sources: "This world is like a vestibule before the world to come."²⁰⁴ "This day is intended for the observance of the *Mitzvos*; the tomorrow, for the enjoyment of the reward earned by means of them."²⁰⁵ Rabbi Luzzatto says further: "No reasonable person can believe that the purpose for which man was created is attainable in this world, for what is man's life in this world? Who is really happy here and who content? 'The number of our years is three score and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years, yet is their pride but travail and vanity'²⁰⁶ because of the suffering, the sickness, the

pain and vexations which man has to endure, and finally death. . . .

"Moreover, if the purpose for which man was created is attainable in this world, why was he imbued with a soul . . . especially since the soul cannot enjoy any of the worldly pleasures?" ²⁰⁷

According to the classic religious view, the purpose of human existence cannot be mere pleasure in the here and now, but finds its fulfillment in something higher—in performing the divine commandments, in living the good life, in immortality.

The classic religious view found moral purpose not only in human existence but in all existence, as well. The universe itself has such a purpose; nature has such a purpose. As the medieval thinkers saw it, inorganic matter sustains organic matter; organic matter sustains living matter; living matter sustains animal life; all matter and animal life sustain human intelligence, and human intelligence finds its highest expression in living the moral life, serving truth, and worshipping God. From this viewpoint, the whole physical world is the ground for the realization of morality in the life of people dwelling in it.

In Jewish vocabulary, a key word is *tachlis*. Basically this word implies the ultimate significance of the particular act or deed: its purpose and its outcomes. My grandfather and his generation were wont to say: *Vas vet zain der tachlis?* (What will be the practical result?) To give another definition of man: Man is a *tachlis*-seeking animal, searching for purpose and meaning in his existence.

The Modern—Materialist View

In contrast to the classic-religious view, which sees man seeking to fulfill his moral destiny, is the modern view, which we all share in greater or lesser degree. This view wants man

to enjoy himself here and now; the most important need in life is to find happiness. This American Dream was portrayed on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* for August 15, 1959. The artist shows us a girl in the arms of a boy, both sitting against a tree trunk near a lake under a large, romantic moon. And what do they see in the moonlit, starry night? Ranch house, two cars, swimming pool, all the latest appliances, do-it-yourself shop equipment, a maid pushing a perambulator, a son playing baseball, and a daughter playing the piano. The editor makes this note on the sketch: "Artist Alajalov, soaring skyward with the lovers, at first started to paint among the star spaces some filmy, ethereal castles in Spain; but then, thinking how practical and knowledgeable today's young people are about outer space, he came down to earth with their dream. A bit cynical? No, because it takes as much moon magic to create a two-car domicile as it does to whip up an air castle. *In essence, what the young romantics want is happiness; and since they have each other, their dream will come true. And to whatever extent they amass worldly goods, they'll share their happiness with the manufacturers and distributors of same.*" (Italics added).

Happiness is here achieved through amassing worldly goods; the more we have, the merrier we can be. If there is a purpose, a *tachlis*, to man's existence, in this view it is simply to earn money to buy and own more worldly goods. There is, however, a fly in the ointment. All is not supremely wonderful in our man-made suburban paradise. Novelists, sociologists, and rabbis have all found flaws in the facade of modern suburbia. Suburbanites themselves seem to react, particularly subconsciously, against their own "modern" manner of living.

We used to believe that suburbanites were the happiest people: they live in quiet privacy away from the noisy city,

amid spacious lawns and green areas, and graced by comfort-making appliances. It now appears that we were wrong. Suburbanites, more than the rest of us, apparently suffer from psychosomatic disorders due to tensions and pressures generated by a great rush and push to acquire worldly goods.

Dr. R. E. Gordon and his wife,²⁰⁸ suburbanites of Englewood, N.J., who have been studying the effects of suburban living, have discovered some unusual things. They conducted a comparative study of three hospitals. The Englewood Hospital in Bergen County, N.J., represents a rapidly growing suburb; Kingston Hospital in Ulster County, N.Y., a moderate-growth mixed-rural community; Olean General Hospital in Cattaraugus County, N.Y., a stable rural area.

The Gordons first studied the data on broncho-pneumonia, an illness which has no psychosomatic causes—a “natural” or purely physical sickness. The over-all percentages of broncho-pneumonia are about the same in all three community hospitals. There has been no change through the years in Olean General Hospital. In Englewood, there has been a recent increase in broncho-pneumonia in young women. This is apparently explained by the fact that suburban mothers must chauffeur the family around, run all the appliances, do without expensive domestic help; hence, they do not rest during colds and minor ills, which accumulate and develop into broncho-pneumonia.

But except for this difference, statistics show that physical conditions are the same in all three communities. Healthier communities would have less of this sickness, sicker or poorer communities would have more of it. That all three communities have about the same amount of broncho-pneumonia establishes the fact that all three are about equal in physical health. If health differences do exist, they must be due to different *psychological* rather than *physical* factors. Let us examine some data, therefore, on various psychosomatic ail-

ments. Incidence of coronary thrombosis, duodenal ulcer, and essential hypertension and hypertensive cardiovascular disease was much higher in Englewood, the fast-growing suburban community, than in Kingston, the moderate-growth mixed-rural community. Kingston in turn had a higher incidence than Olean, the stable rural area.

Why do suburbanites suffer more from ailments due to living under great pressure? Because they are under greater pressures than dwellers in the more stable communities. This, in turn, is because they are *vertically mobile*. They are moving up the ladder of social and economic status. Suburbanites, more than those in more stable communities, must live up to the standard of living they enjoy so much. They must buy the new station wagon, or lose status if they don't. Their home must have all the gadgets, necessary and unnecessary, that go with "comfortable" living. New furniture must be purchased to fit the new *decor*. Higher living standards require far more income; more income means higher taxes and higher expenses for a style of life that goes with higher income.

To be caught in this pinch between higher expenses and higher costs, pulling along on an ever higher income which never seems enough, is sufficient to produce the pressures and tensions that bring on emotional ailments. In the more stable communities, where there is little *vertical mobility*, these pressures do not exist, and hence people do not suffer from these ailments in the same degree. From a purely medical-health point of view, the emphasis upon amassing worldly goods is undesirable. The quest for things makes people sick.

Depth Analysis

Let us further analyze the inner process that accentuates the tension and the pressures. If people suffering from these

psychosomatic ailments really believed it is worth it to drive around in a new car even if one does not know where the next payments are coming from, if they felt deep-down that all their new gadgets really make life worthwhile, they would accept the worry and enjoy the pleasure of using the things and worldly goods. Live and be merry, would be their motto. But they are ambivalent about their pleasures. The mind consciously tells them all this push and drive is a wonderful thing; but deep-down they wonder if all this effort is really worthwhile, if all this pleasure is really what the advertisers claim. A doubt creeps across the minds of these ailing people and they wonder: is it really worth it? Does it pay to get into debt to own more gadgets? The importance and significance of having things seem questionable. *Doubt eats away the pleasure.* There is no feeling of rightness about the whole venture. The rewards do not seem worth the effort.

The Saturday Evening Post²⁰⁹ in a leading article entitled "*Parsons-Come-Lately*," stated in the subtitle that "Thousands of successful older men, finding their business careers meaningless, have started life anew as low-paid, obscure clergymen, and they've never been happier." To provide for this new trend in Parsons-Come-Lately, "More than half of all U.S. Protestant theological schools have been compelled to establish family unit dormitories for students already fathers."

One example discussed at length is that of Ferdinand D. Saunders, age 41, who walked out of a job with IBM at \$25,000, to become a pastor in a tiny Long Island mission at \$3600. The article asks: "What then caused such an upheaval within Saunders that he threw aside a career many men might envy and became a county cleric? The motivations which a psychiatrist might search for are lacking. Saunders was happy in his work, which was ego satisfying and gave him high community status. He had no worries,

money problems, social conflict or wife troubles. No traumatic illness or emotional disorder had induced him to re-appraise his life. *He just wasn't satisfied.* (Italics added). About 1950, he became restless, and didn't know why. A thought began to nag his mind: there must be more to life than business success, more to ambition than money making. 'I just got emptier and emptier,' he recalls." ^{209a}

To phrase it in our way, Saunders was living without moral purpose. Enjoying what most men would envy, he felt "empty." Materially, he had everything that could make a man happy and content; but inwardly he felt empty, incomplete. More and more people, unhappy with their lives, discontented with a kind of life which is supposed to bring happiness, share this same feeling of emptiness. The materials for happiness are there; but the spirit is lacking.

It is the moral and ethical content of our days that makes life worth living. The true "formula" for peace and contentment in life rests upon *moral purpose*.

The Rabbis teach this in commenting upon the verse: "It was evening, it was morning, the sixth day." ²¹⁰ With all other days, after they were completed, Bible expresses itself: "First day," "second day," "third day," without the definite article *the*. But with the sixth day, the Bible says: "*The* sixth day," Why the definite article? Rashi's answer is based on the fact that in Hebrew the definite article is the fifth letter of the alphabet—"HAY." The Hay, the definite article, is added to indicate that God so created the universe that the *five* Books of Moses *must* be accepted by Israel. "Another reason: all days of Creation were unfulfilled until '*the* sixth day' of Sivan, when the Torah was revealed at Mt. Sinai." ²¹¹ The universe finds its purpose fulfilled in *Mattan Torah*, the Revelation.

When was the world fully created? On the sixth day, for the purpose of world-being became fulfilled on that day. *A*

world without moral purpose is no world. A person without “*The Sixth Day*” is no person, but an animal, a drudge. His life is empty. This is what Ferdinand D. Saunders learned. This is what so many suburbanites are learning. Only if we find the moral purpose to life can we make life wonderful, meaningful, and worth living.

“Whither Art Thou Going?”

Man is a being who needs a purpose. He cannot live aimlessly. He must have *tachlis*, a reason to live significantly. Akavya, son of Mahalalel, summed up purposeful living in this way: “Know whence thou comest, whither thou art going, and before whom thou wilt in the future have to give an account and a reckoning.”²¹²

Ethics of the Fathers, our book of Rabbinic wisdom, emphasizes the place of *Din V'Cheshbon* in life. Upon every action and upon the sum total of all actions and performances there must be *Din V'Cheshbon*—account and reckoning. Life is not an aimless, haphazard passage of events.

Life With Moral Purpose

The *Shulchan Aruch* makes every aspect of life a moral or ethical matter. Hours of work per day, rate of profit, amount of charity, rate of interest, working conditions and salaries, father's seat at the table, kind and quantity of food, table talk, amount of sleep, number of children, marital happiness—all come under the purview of ethical norms and laws. Every aspect of life must dovetail into the total unity of life which leads to salvation. Everything that leads toward the desired end is good; anything that distracts and turns away from the total unity is bad.

Man thus lives his span of years on earth in a purposeful and meaningful manner. Judah, son of Taima, used to say: “At five years, the age is reached for the study of the scripture; at ten, for the study of Mishnah; at thirteen, for the fulfillment of the Commandments; at fifteen, for the study of the Talmud; at eighteen, for marriage; at twenty, for seeking a livelihood; at thirty, for entering into one's full strength; at forty, for understanding; at fifty, for counsel;

at sixty, a man attains old age; at seventy, the hoary head; at eighty, the gift of special strength; at ninety, he bends beneath the weight of years; at a hundred, he is as if he were already dead and had passed away from the world."²¹³

Living in this organized and orderly manner, man could follow a timetable in existence, with all his actions every day *under God*. This style of life gave human existence majesty, importance, the uplift of a pilgrimage.

A modern Chassidic Rebbe, who was able to learn a lesson from every event and thing, once was asked by a *Chassid*, "What is the significance of each of the following: a telephone, a telegram, and a train?" The Rebbe taught: "The telephone teaches: if we speak here, we can be heard up there. The telegram teaches: every word is recorded and we must pay for every word. The train teaches: everything runs on a time-table; when the time comes we must move. *'Ven die tzait kumt, muz men gayn.'*"

The people who lived in this moral-purposeful manner may outwardly have been ordinary carpenters, tailors, shoemakers, tinsmiths; but inwardly they felt like partners of the Almighty, worthy of His concern and interest. This *weltanschauung*, or world-view prevalent among all people in Europe, Jews and Christians, lasted longer in the rural areas and gradually disappeared in the urban areas. Among Jews it lasted right up to the time they emigrated to America and settled in our big cities.

Moral Dissolution

Modern life brought sophistication and doubt, which caused disbelief in and dissolution of the old moral-ethical system. The areas of life that were originally governed by a moral code were now freed from any moral supervision.

Family

The moral laws governing family life have gone out of vogue. The grand, all-inclusive term *Taharas Hamishpachah*, family purity, covering many attitudes toward family life—behavior of husband and wife, rearing of sons and daughters—has disappeared, except among the ultra-orthodox. What went on in the family was always the province of religious-moral authority. Even in sophisticated ages of ancient Rome and the Italian Renaissance, politics belonged to Caesar, business to Mammon, and the family to religion.

Religious teachers of long ago knew what modern psychologists have “discovered”: that there is a very intimate connection between family life and religious life. Only in our secular generation, when religion has lost so much of its vitality, could people be shocked at such a simple truth. Why have our religious morals laid such tremendous emphasis upon the religious control of sexual experience? Why have they extolled chastity, preached continence even in marriage, denounced promiscuity and adultery, insisted that marriage be celebrated in a religious atmosphere, demanded religious divorce, upheld parental control over children? Our ancestors were not prudish. They believed that unless man controlled the drives within him, he would be dominated by them. They knew that unless the libidinous desire could be harnessed, it would distract from the religious-moral life, for if it is not sternly regulated, if it is allowed to run wild, it rules the whole personality to the exclusion of spiritual and moral interests. They also knew that these same passions, if sublimated and directed, may come forth as religious ecstasy, intellectual drive, and social initiative.

The same kind of concern for food and drink was shown by religious morality. If a man became a glutton, and the

major preoccupation in his life became food in quantity, or if he developed a habit of drinking intoxicating beverages on every occasion, religious-morality would attack this gluttony and drunkardness as immoral, for these also can distract man from the religious-moral life.

Examine your own life and see if *you* apply Torah-morals to family life, to teaching your daughters and sons morality, to your eating and drinking. Many of us are not even aware that these moral doctrines and laws exist. Some would even object to this moral code as an interference in their private lives.

Business

The traditional moral-ethical laws governing business are now also abandoned or neglected. The Bible assumed the right to regulate business in the interest of man's welfare. In Rabbinic literature there are many tractates devoted to business ethics, where the minutest form of deception and dishonesty is severely condemned. Honesty and justice were here applied to business rigorously and consistently. Rabbinic ethics went so far as to introduce a concept of *Lifnim Meshuras Hadin*, "more than the line (letter) of the law."²¹⁴ This principle of ethical action is based on the Biblical verse: "And thou shalt teach them statutes and laws, and thou shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work they must do."²¹⁵ The Rabbis, in the Talmud, interpret the verse as follows: the words, "the statutes and the laws," cover all cases to which legal justice should apply. What, then, does the rest of the verse mean, "shalt show them the way wherein they must walk and the work they must do"? "The way wherein they must walk" refers to special deeds of loving kindness, while "the work they must do," *Zu lifnim meshuras hadin*, designates "the more than the line of the law." One of

the moralists states: "Jerusalem was destroyed because they followed the exact line of the law, but never ventured beyond the line of the law." ²¹⁶

After the destruction of the Temple, Rabbinic business ethics was highly developed and deeply cultivated and applied; but in our contemporary generation, it is neglected or unknown. The Jewish Theological Seminary recently had to hold a study seminar to acquaint rabbis and business men with this traditional ethical system and to retrieve aspects of it for modern application.

Occasionally a rabbi or minister speaks out on some unethical business practice in some segment of the community; and always, grieved individuals deny his right to apply ethical thinking to their deeds. In self-protection, the business community does not want to be burdened by non-economic considerations. If a rabbi should speak out against slum housing, he is told that this is not the realm of religion; if he pin-points problems and dishonest practices within unionism, he is told religion should not "mix" in the labor movement; if he enumerates industrial and business abuses, he is told business is business and not to be challenged with morality.

Modern life insisted upon dissolution of moral and ethical norms. Every group called for their abdication when applied to itself, but insisted on them when applied against the other party. Notice the public releases by capital and labor in any big strike, each invoking morality and ethics against the other.

The Corporation and the State

A very serious development which upset ethical and moral standards in modern times is the corporation. Ethical and moral standards apply to persons, to individuals. A person does right or wrong, makes his decision and assumes the responsibility. Psychologically, morality must be personal if

the sinner is to feel guilty and hold himself responsible. For example, a corporation doesn't hire Jews. The Anti-Defamation League tries to focus the responsibility—on whom? The stockholders? Each stockholder's power is infinitesimal. The management? They don't make employment decisions—the personnel manager in each plant or office hires and fires. The personnel manager? He passes the responsibility on to the production chief, who shunts it on to "the way things are." The men, he says, like to work, and do their work *better*, with "their own kind." By the same process of thinking, an individual Nazi German, who only "carried out orders" from the top, also absolved himself from his responsibility and guilt for mass murder.

Major aspects of life, in government, business, corporations, and unions, have now become so rationalized that the average person has no authority to assume responsibility. Morality and ethics cannot be applied, he feels, to their areas and decisions.

Personal Relations

Let us return to personal relations where the individual responsibility is clear, where no one can hide behind the apron of anonymity. Why did the application of personal morality and ethics decline? Why do many people no longer feel bound to the ethical and moral teachings of our civilization emanating from the Bible? What forces divorced ethics and morality from life? Let us list a few:

1. *Geographic mobility.* The average American is a migrant, who lives in a society on wheels. Americans are people who have lost association with old landmarks. They have crossed an ocean and spread themselves across a continent. If an American continues to dwell in his grandfather's house, he feels almost as if he is living in a museum. Moral behavior

requires rootedness and stability. Mobility destroys the stability needed for moral development.

Moral behavior needs social stability and time for precipitation. People need time to learn to accept a way of doing things. In a society on wheels, moral authority cannot be established firmly.

2. *Cultural mobility.* The older generation had difficulty instilling strong moral attitudes because the children answered that the "old man" can't know what he is talking about: his morality was for the "old country." Puerto Rican youth are now telling their parents what many Jewish youth told their immigrant parents a generation or two ago. The American-born generation grew up rebelliously. As it matured and settled down to married stable life, superficially accepting a moral system, post-war prosperity has sent the young couples into newly built suburbs. The older generation with its traditions is not present, or if present is told not to interfere in the lives of their children. "*Mish dich nit arein bei die kinder.*"

3. *Social mobility.* In an expanding economy, people rise rapidly on the ladder of economic income. New millionaires are created. The lower economic classes push into the middle and upper classes, pulling along with them their older vulgarity, their *prostheit*. They have not mastered the refinement and social manners of the cultured classes. With more money and more opportunity, they display even more their lack of morals and ethics. The poor person is not necessarily more moral and ethical, but he does not possess the wealth to indulge his immoralities and vices. Once he gets it, for a period of time he casts aside the virtues that he once at least gave lip-service to.

4. *No moral or ethical aristocracy.* There is no settled, accepted class in American society which can set an example in moral-ethical living. Either the present generation

of our "elite" or their forebears were fairly recently "robber barons" who acquired wealth by questionable moral methods. In our own little Jewish community, you hear comments on a so-called leader: "Who is he? I remember when he was only . . ." Or, "I know how he got his first . . ." The lack of respected moral leadership in a community saps the moral strength of a community.

Theoreticians for Dissolution

So far, this has been a social-cultural explanation of the dissolution of morality and ethics in our society. In addition, intellectual forces also tore down Biblical morality and ethics. Let's call their exponents the Theoreticians of Immorality or the Ideologists of Dissolution. A *correct* reading of their writings may show them to be just the opposite—strong moral proponents, men who wanted to reestablish a strong system of ethics and morals in place of a tottering moral system. However, in their popular, vulgar forms as misunderstood by most people, these men contributed to our moral dissolution and ethical deterioration.

Karl Marx. The ethical overtone in his writings casts a doubt upon law, morality and religion. Law is capitalist law to protect the interest of the capitalist class against the workers; morality is an invention for the exploiters to keep the exploited sober and efficient for factory, farm, and office work; religion is the opiate of the people. There is much truth in the Marxian critique, which can be applied to correct the abuses in law, morality, and religion. But his followers and those influenced by them took his teachings as a call to denounce all traditional law, morality, and religion, *as such*. Accordingly, Marx has been a destructive influence upon ethics and morality.

Sigmund Freud. As psychotherapy and clinical technique,

Freudian teachings are accepted as medicine for the maintenance of mental health. The ethical overtone of his writings, however, cast doubt upon sexual morality and tended to destroy the moral motivation in men. Our adolescent youth revere Freud as a prophet who took them out of the land of moral bondage and led them into the promised land of free love and promiscuity. This is, of course, a misreading of Freud. But the popular mind, seeking justification for its immorality, uses his name and misinterprets his teaching. Accordingly, if a person is charitable, merciful, or law abiding, analysis will not show his pure ethical motivation, but "deeper" subconscious forces of a selfish and sexual nature. By twisting Freud's theories, the 18-year-old seducer convinces the 17-year-old girl that he is more mature than she because he obeys his libido, whereas her morality is merely an example of childishness and fear. The Freudian ethic thus becomes a destructive influence upon morality.

Friedrich Nietzsche. This German social philosopher challenged the western ethical system. Basing himself upon Darwinian survival of the fittest, he tried to give ethical stature to the law of the jungle. Nietzsche foresaw a new "Superman." He believed that competition and struggle bring out the best in men, and the best man always wins. The categories of good and evil, of reason and law, he denied. In their place, he substituted biological vitalities as "*blut und boden*" (blood and soil). People don't think with their minds, they think with their blood. This was an irrational, instinctive protest against making man a purely rational machine. In seeking to give recognition to the emotional-biological vitalities in man, Nietzsche called for a transvaluation of all values. As he was interpreted by Houston Chamberlin, Rosenberg, and Hitler, Nietzsche became the proponent of the blond beast who saw in war the highest human ethical-moral

values. Survival of the fittest becomes the moral test, and war, brutality, and killing are ways of bringing about the best in men. Peace is weak, cowardly.

Count Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law, once flew a bomber over Ethiopia in the Italian-Ethiopian War and dropped bombs on a peaceful, primitive village. He has left us a description of the bomb crater, as it blew earth and dirt skyward, as a rose, and the human beings blown up seemed to him the seeds and petals inside the rose—a thing of beauty! With his adolescent-delinquent mind, he glorified his own brutality and mocked the peaceful Ethiopians. This is the immorality of murder and brutality raised to a pseudo-ethic.

Marx's ideology was used to argue that man can live by bread alone. Freudian ethic was used to show that man can live with sex alone. Nietzschean ethic was used to raise war and murder to a value that brings out the best in man.

The pressure cooker which brewed these social conditions and ideologies into their final mess was the two World Wars and what they brought in their wake. Here, men separated from their mothers and wives, and children learned to kill or be killed. Considering only the few conditions described and the influence of the Theoreticians of Immorality, it is truly remarkable that society generally still remains on an even keel.

In the Absence of Morality

If there is no divine or universal system of ethics, what value system *does* govern human relations? What ethical norms guide human behavior and man-to-man relationships?

First, there are the practical motives. It is advantageous to have a good reputation. The most important commandment is the Eleventh: "Thou shalt not be caught." Discre-

tion is the better part of valor. A Rabbinic moralist put it this way: "If the evil inclination grabs you, pull him to *shul*; if the evil inclination is still overpowering, go to a place where no one recognizes you." ²¹⁷

In the new art of public relations the masters of image-projection can advise any person how to *appear* ethical and moral. You need not accept all the moral attitudes of the churches, but do not offend them or upset them because that may hurt the sales of your product. Play it safe.

Secondly, there is the desire to avoid outside control. Hence, we set up a code of business practice or professional practice and try to control the flagrant abuses within the group—by the group itself. This voluntary self-policing avoids stringent, legal control from the outside.

A third form of controlled behavior is *playing the role*. In our society, each person performs different functions, plays different roles: A man is a husband; he may also be a salesman, an assistant scout master, and a lieutenant in the Army Reserve. In each activity he plays a different role. He can be a poor husband, who shows no consideration and respect for his wife, but a capable assistant scout master who is super-patient with children; a mediocre salesman, but an excellent reserve officer. Our man is not consistently bad or good; in each role he plays, he acts differently. In fact, sometimes you would never realize the immoral husband in the moral reserve officer. Society and its institutions thus operate through role playing and not through a basic total moral and ethical commitment.

This role-playing is partly the result of *specialization* in our modern society. The specialist, in any profession or trade, can be an immoral, selfish cad elsewhere, but in his particular specialty he is the undisputed master. If the radar specialist is immoral and neglects his children, it is no concern

of ours; if we need a good radar specialist, we call him in and recommend him to others. On the other hand, if a man is kind, charitable, generous, and extremely ethical but a *ne-bich*, a weak, ineffective person, then we ignore him in reaching decisions.

The modern world is made-up of independent institutions and functions, each serving its own special field. A man is judged today by his technical know-how in a given field, not by his morals or ethics as a human being in general. In a highly specialized society, there is no over-arching, all-inclusive ethical theory, only the need for efficiency and ability. In the Frank Sinatra film, *Ocean's 11*, the unethical, amoral but suave gangster is the symbolic hero of our age.

There is no basic theory or belief today to guide a person's behavior; but there are certain fads and fashions that must be strictly observed if one is not to become an outcast from a particular group. Certain lawyers are almost partners in crime with their clients, but if they observe the amenities and rules of the game and are successful, they are respected practitioners of the law. Certain professional people and business men indulge in all kinds of malpractice, but if they know how to cross their "t's" and dot their "i's," they are "respectable" and even honored and admired. There is no moral authority to which people subscribe, but people obey fads, fashions, and opinions of cliques, sets, groups. The first families, the successful people, the smart sets enjoy a good deal of deference and a certain tribute of imitation. But these people have no real authority in morals or in manners, because they themselves have few standards that outlast the fashion of the season. These "first families" set control over dress, drink, and clothes; but what they believe about God, salvation, good and evil, the moral life, nobody knows, not even they themselves. And nobody cares.

Moral Man in an Amoral Society

This kind of amoral society, with pockets of morality and professional committees for ethical-standards—this society which emphasizes and respects efficiency, professional competence, and financial success, but does not possess any ethical system nor any all-inclusive ethical purpose—affects different people in different ways.

The amoral or immoral individual goes on his merry way. He amasses large quantities of money; he moves from conquest to conquest, financial and sexual. Sometimes he matures; sometimes his mother's or father's training rebels within him and he repents. Until then, he goes along unconcerned.

The moral person finds this efficient but amoral existence difficult to take. At first he tells himself all the answers that should make life worthwhile. He has a nice home, fine family, worldly goods, secure job, and so on. But soon he feels like the "Parsons-Come-Lately" (described in *Saturday Evening Post* of August 29th, 1959): the thousands of successful older men, finding their business careers meaningless, who have started life anew as low-paid obscure clergymen.

If this moral person could describe it, this is what is taking place: There are moments of misgiving in which he finds that the world of which he is part leaves a dusty taste in his mouth. He may be busy with many things, but he discovers one day that he is no longer sure they are worth doing. He has been much preoccupied, but he is no longer sure he knows why. He has become involved in an elaborate routine of pleasures, but now they do not seem to interest him so much. He begins to feel like Ferdinand D. Saunders, the \$25,000 a year man and vice-president of I.B.M.—just not satisfied with life. *"He became restless, and didn't know why. A*

*thought began to nag his mind. There must be more to life than business success, more to ambition than making money. 'I just got emptier and emptier,' he recalls."*²¹⁸

The psychosomatic patients in the suburban areas which we have described have not reached this level of clear thinking, nor are they aware of their dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, without articulate thought, their digestive, nervous, or circulatory systems are subconsciously rebelling. The top of their mind is willing, but inwardly there is dissatisfaction and unrest.

The moral human being is a purpose-seeking animal. He seeks *tachlis*, must find life worthwhile and meaningful. He must have a standard that doing one thing is better than doing any other. Unless he has such an overall standard system, life loses its significance. He may move efficiently from task to task, from sale to sale, from one social activity to another; but all this pursuit does not lead to fulfillment. All his busyness seems to lead nowhere; he is moving on a treadmill. The handwriting is on the wall: "*Mené, Mené, Tekel Upharsin*"—"I am weighed in the balance and found wanting."²¹⁹

Life without an overarching moral purpose does not add up. Unless a person knows where he is going, he is drifting, pushed and pulled by pressures and fads, but not moving on his own moral power. Such a life, even though filled with activity and financial success, is empty.

The Reward of Virtue

We have explained some of the social factors that have weakened morality, and cited the intellectual forces which have also helped in the dissolution of morality. We have pointed out that man as a person needs an over-arching system of morals. Obviously, society cannot function without a system of morals, and no society has ever existed without its system of morals, strict or lax. On what basis can we erect such a moral system? We are not analyzing *what it is to be good*, but *why be good*?

Why Be Good?

The starting point of our moral system or code of ethics must be in the individual acceptance of that system. Insofar as men lose their belief in a heavenly Father, they have to find some other basis for their moral choices than the revelation of His will. They must find the basis of the good wholly within *human* experience. The difference between good and evil must be a difference which men themselves recognize and understand. Happiness is not the reward of virtue: it is inherent in virtue, it resides with virtue. It follows too that virtue cannot be commanded and dictated; doing the good must flow out of personal conviction and desire.

If the basis of ethics is not in a revealed and commanded source, it must be in the person himself. The desire to do good must grow out of the person himself. The motive behind the person's desire to seek out the good and do it, the *why be good*, must be an inner conviction.

For our sceptical generation, an ethical system resting upon authority, imposed from without, is psychologically unacceptable. People like to feel that they choose their own cigarette, that they "think for themselves." Dictatorships become

psychologically acceptable through a semantic trick: they are called "people's democracy." In our age, tyranny must pose as freedom. Hence, to expect people to accept an authoritative ethic, especially when it is called by its correct name, is to ask people to go against the spirit of their age.

The very force which gave more authority to moral insight for our forefathers obscures moral insight for us. Our grandfather's generation lived in a world disposed to practice virtue if it was revealed to them as a divine commandment. For our generation, authority has the opposite effect. Like the typical adolescent, we deliberately disobey the voice of authority. A thoroughly modernized young man today distrusts moral wisdom precisely because it is "commanded." And since many parents resented in their youth the authoritative manner in which morality was taught to them, they are now lax or deliberately "democratic" in their teaching of morality. Many times, the parents themselves do not possess inner conviction, and are therefore ineffective in transmitting moral teaching and practice to their children.

For our times, moral acceptance must rest upon *inward acceptance of virtue*, upon voluntary appeal. There cannot be any external force to impose it.

Virtue Is Its Own Reward

In Judaism, the appeal for the moral system it taught was always to *inner conviction* side by side with the appeal to divine authority. When our prophets expounded their moral demands, they appealed to the intrinsic value of justice, peace, and righteousness. Why be good? Because it is good to be good! That the reward for virtue is virtue itself ²²⁰ has always been part of rabbinic teaching—yet without ever questioning the truth of divine reward and punishment. About 250 B.C.E., Antigones of Socho used to say: "Be not like servants

who minister to their master upon the condition of receiving a reward; but be like servants who minister to their master without the condition of receiving a reward; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you.”²²¹ Judaism at its best has always taught that virtue is its own reward and no further reward need be sought. Thus, Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah*, says: “A man should not do the *mitzvos* and learn Torah so that he will receive the blessings promised, or he will obtain the hereafter . . . it is not fitting to serve God in this manner. For he who serves God in this way serves out of fear, *and this is not the level sought by the prophets and teachers*. One does not worship God this way, only the ignorant and the children are trained to worship God from fear, *so that they will develop and worship God out of love*.”²²² (Italics added).

Judaism does have a humanistic, altruistic approach in presenting its demand for an ethical system. It asks man to serve God through religion, and to help his fellow-man through ethics, purely out of love and virtue. No appeal is made for self-interest and greater rewards, though these will follow, according to religious doctrine. There is no recourse to external authority. Man should serve willingly, voluntarily, *from within*, out of love—and not from fear or compulsion. A person should seek and do virtue not for any desire for reward or from fear of punishment, but because he *wants* to seek the good and live with it. This ideal has always been one approach in Judaism.

The person who is altruistic by nature and intelligent enough to realize he should do the good for its own sake and forego his own selfish pleasure and desire—such a person is no problem. But “the ignorant and the children,” as the Rambam puts it, those who are selfish and immature, concerned only with their own needs and pleasures, and yet have the animal power to pursue them—these do not seek

virtue for its own sake. They are not interested in doing good for another, in personal deprivation for the sake of another's welfare. Being totally subjective, they are involved only with themselves. How can you get such people to think about the consequences of their actions as they affect *other* people?

Yetzer Hara as a Moral-Social Stimulus

Rabbinic ethics does not underestimate the evil nature in man. As the Bible put it: "The inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth."²²³ There is in man a self-centered desire to think principally of himself. This desire they called *Yetzer Hara*, the evil desire. But man is also created in God's image and so has *Yetzer Hatov*, the desire to do good and serve truth. There is, of course, conflict between the two desires. In terms of Freudian teachings, we may describe the human dilemma as "a conflict between strong cravings and potent moral necessities," as phrased by Professor Dollard.²²⁴

The Rabbis felt that the moral human being must learn to control *Yetzer Hara* and make it serve *Yetzer Hatov*; let *Yetzer Hara* give *Yetzer Hatov* the stimulus and power to do good. "Were it not for *Yetzer Hara*, man would not build a home, would not marry woman, would not buy and sell."²²⁵ From this approach, all of Judaism is a religious method of civilizing the passions, of bringing the strong cravings into harmony with the moral necessities.

The ethical approach of Judaism rests upon *character* building. How is this done? What is character? "*The sum total of dispositions and attitudes that a man possesses towards actions done willingly constitutes his character.*"²²⁶ If a person acts charitably in situations of need, and with all his heart and soul, believes this a good thing to do, then his will and his mind respond together. If this reaction occurs regu-

larly as the person grows up, a charitable reflex is developed in the person and charity becomes part of his character: acting charitably becomes his "second nature." For a man so trained, the charitable reflex can be stronger than the basic drives of food, sex, and sleep. Some people deprive themselves of these necessities so that others may have them. This is what the Bible meant: "Train a child the way he should go, and even when he is old, he shall not depart from it." ²²⁷ The Rabbis in the Midrash put it this way: "Straighten out the branch of a tree when it is soft; for when it hardens, you will not be able to make it straight." ²²⁸

Character is the habit of the will that induces man to perform acts of morality and ethics, to resist the desire to perform acts of immorality. This is the prime purpose of all education in the United States—to *teach morality and build character, not to train technicians or professionals or businessmen.* (Read the preamble to any state law governing the administration of education). When a person reaches that moral state, when *Yetzer Hara* has been harnessed to *Yetzer Hatov*, the person "naturally" and willingly obeys the Ten Commandments. That person has no desire to steal; he does not covet. "The thoughts of the righteous are right." ²²⁹

There is no evil desire in the heart of the perfectly righteous man, a man we call a *tzadik*. The inner will of this man has been so transformed that the usual selfish drives have been sublimated to the good. At this level, it is not just realizing what is good and what is bad, and then choosing the good, after a conflict between *Yetzer Hara* and *Yetzer Hatov*. At this level of character development, the person has lost the *desire* for evil, has developed a reflex for good that operates naturally. The *tzadik* will refrain from even *Avak Gezailah*, "the dust of theft"; he has no desire to look at another man's wife, let alone touch or embrace her.

This is what the Psalmist prayed for: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." ²³⁰ A clean heart—the habitual, reflexive desire to do good and turn away from evil.

R. Johanan ben Zakkai once said to his five disciples: "Go forth and see which is the good way to which a man should cleave." We might put it: what good quality shall a man develop which is essential for the development of good character? In other words, what is the clue to righteous living? "R. Eliezer said: a good eye. R. Joshua said: a good friend. R. Jose said: a good neighbor. R. Shimon said: one who foresees the fruit of an action. R. Elazar said: *a good heart*. (The heart, in Biblical and Greek psychology, is considered as the seat of the soul, the faculties of its desire: *Yetzer Hatov* and *Yetzer Hara*; its thought and will, *the essence of man*.) Thereupon he said to them: I approve the words of Elazar, the son of Arach, rather than your words, *for in his words yours are included*." ²³¹

Without going into the significance of each statement and its implied theory, the all-inclusive statement "a good heart" means that the totality of man, his whole character, must be good. His *Yetzer Hara* has been civilized (not repressed) into strengthening *Yetzer Hatov*. A good heart means the internal transformation of desire, and a *tzadik*. The man with good character seeks and does the good because that has gradually become his second "nature." Through this very slow process does a person overcome his evil desire to be selfish, to seek selfish pleasure, to obtain selfish power. *After being transformed, he will do good, simply and automatically.*

Meanwhile, during the process of achieving sainthood—and this is a lifetime process—man seeks to do good, *because it is good*; he seeks to harness *Yetzer Hara* to *Yetzer Hatov* and performs *Mitzvos*, acts of virtue *for their own sake*. He continues to wrestle with himself until his strong cravings are harmonized with the moral necessities.

The Mature Personality

The Biblical-Rabbinic approach to the development of character is corroborated by recent psychological theories about maturity. The presentation here does not follow any one school of psychology nor is it peculiar to psychoanalysis. It is today generally accepted in psychology that the theory of maturity rests upon the concept that there are stages in the development of personality.

The first stage of human development takes place in the womb, where the embryo lives as a parasite of its mother's body. An outer world exists for it only in a highly restricted degree; all its needs for protection, warmth, and nourishment are assured by the mother. At this stage the embryo lives in unconditioned omnipotence.

In the second stage a disagreeable, terrifying thing takes place for the embryo. It comes into the world, it is born, and the trouble of living begins. Pleasant comfort is no longer automatically provided; it is sometimes delayed, sometimes absent. The new-born infant must face cold, hunger, noise, light, changes of all kinds. Yet, even though he is less comfortable, parents and nurses still cater to the infant's needs and desires. They try to guess these in advance, and to make his existence as painless and pleasant as they can. The infant is only slightly less omnipotent than before.

In the third stage the infant grows. His needs become manifold, and his parents and nurses cannot anticipate them all. The infant begins to use gestures and noises as a kind of expression to indicate needs and wants. The infant is still omnipotent with the help of cries and gestures, that usually work like magic.

At the fourth stage, the number of wants and needs in-

creases with the growth of the infant. Parents cannot possibly fulfill all demands. The infant soon discovers that he is not really all-powerful. His wish is not a command to an obedient universe, and the wishes of others are more powerful and will often prevail over his own.

At the next stages, the infant learns about the external world. He realizes that all wishes cannot be fulfilled, that certain wishes are never to be fulfilled, simply because of the nature of things. He is now beginning to grow up, and his experience of frustration is part of growth. As he grows older, he learns to "handle" the fact that he'll never be able to fulfill all his wishes, that he must adapt his wishes to reality, or develop new inner abilities to change reality.

With development of language, the child learns and understands why all wishes must not be satisfied: some are dangerous, some are unhealthy, some are impossible, some are contradictory, some impinge upon others' welfare. At this stage, the feeling of omnipotence must give way to an appreciation of the reality all about us and the reality within us.

The process of maturity consists of a revision of desire in the light of understanding reality. The infant knows only his own desire, and very little of external reality. From childhood into maturity, he learns of other persons, their needs, their feelings; the conflict between self and others; the realization that we cannot always have our own way, and must learn to live productively anyway.

This civilizing process goes on in the growth of every normal person. The child at home is only one in a family, a person with other people; there are rights for every person, and one person's rights must not infringe upon another's. In this way the desire of the child is directed and controlled. Some strong-willed children put up a tougher battle than others, but they too must eventually learn to outgrow their

infantile self-centeredness. With coaching and control, most children outgrow most of their infantile desires and most adults have put away most of their childish needs.

Moral laws, in so far as they are rational, are attempts to curb those people who never fully grow up, who remain infantile or childlike in their ethical reactions or in certain aspects of their morality. If an infant learns that it cannot have and touch everything, if the child learns to respect his brother's toy or his little friend's ball, as he grows into manhood he has civilized his desire to take and own everything he sees into an acceptance of reality—that certain things he cannot have, must not have, and therefore will not take. The moral law, "Thou shalt not steal," is already accepted by a person growing up from infancy into maturity.

People who do not grow up, in whom the desire to take someone else's toy has not been civilized, need the moral law to direct them because they are immature, *outer-directed*. The mature person has his morality built into him; his morality is *inner-directed*. The fully matured person so understands reality that he does not desire what is not rightfully his; he desires only what is right. In the fully matured person, the moral problem of whether to yield to impulse or to check it will disappear, because such a person will desire only what is right and proper.

The moralist and the psychologist thus both reach the same conclusion, although they start from different premises. The moralist begins with a humanistic ethic resting upon acceptance and understanding, and seeks the development of character and the acceptance of a moral code. The psychologist begins with a self-centered infant, and seeks maturity and an acceptance of reality. But for both, the result, either in the man of character or in the man of maturity, is *civilized will* or *civilized desire*. Both moralist and psychologist seek *ethical personality*. Both seek the man who instinctively will

do what the psalmist asks of him: "Depart from evil and do good." ²³²

To sum up: After pointing out previously that ethical learning has received some blows in our culture from sociological and ideological factors, we began with the starting-point of all ethical reconstruction in our day: not with the philosophical question of *what* is good, but with the psychological question of *why* do good, and *how* to get oneself to do it.

The answer to the first question: *We do good because it is good to do good*. The moralist's answer to the second question is disciplined character; the psychologist's answer is maturity. Both seek the same goal, but with different terminology.

The scholars and saints in Judaism have always sought the good for its intrinsic value. What was originally the quest of scholars and saints must now become the goal of all people—all who want to possess character or be mature.

The Unconditioned Ethic

We have explained the ideal ethical person—the *tzadik*—according to religious tradition, or the man of maturity according to the psychological school of thought. We suggested that both ideals are much alike, with some difference in emphasis. We saw that the religious ideal of the *tzadik* in ethical living is achieved when *Yetzer Hara* has been harnessed to *Yetzer Hatov*. The conflict between both desires decreases, as *Yetzer Hara* becomes more civilized. In rare individuals, *Yetzer Hara* has been sublimated and there is no conflict, only a complete inner harmony. The mature person does not need a moral code because the essence of his personal desires is moral. The moral code is necessary mainly for those immature individuals who still desire the unethical.

Let us go a bit further into the religious view of the ethical person and the religious critique of ethical actions. We begin our discussion of ethics, with a passage from the *Ethics of the Fathers*.

Human Perversity

Hillel said: "Trust not in thyself until the day of thy death." ²³³ A person should never be confident that he can sin no longer, should never let his self-awareness down, lest he lapse again into sin. Even an old person should beware, and not become self-confident and think that the conflict in him has been resolved with a victory of *Yetzer Hatov*, the good desire. All the commentaries on *Ethics of the Fathers* cite the historical incident related in the Talmud. "Yochanan the High Priest served in his post eighty years, and in the end became a Sadducee." ²³⁴ At the end of his life, he turned heretic, and denied Rabbinic Judaism.

To the rabbinic ethicists, there is no real end to the inner

conflict. Man's knowledge, his wisdom, his handsome appearance, his charity, his virtues, his goodness may be his undoing, as he is disarmed by self-praise and pride. The Spanish rabbi, *Reb Menachem Meiri*, taught: "Do not leave yourself open to sin because you are sure of yourself, thinking that you are accepted as pure, without any deviation occurring to you." ^{233a} It is unfitting for a person to have faith in himself (in the ethical sense—not in business or in social life) and it is impossible to believe in man and to trust in him always as a *tzadik*, except on the day of his death. ^{233b}

The Rabbis were realistic about human beings, and therefore never underestimated human perversity and deception. Something could always occur in the life of a person to make him choose evil instead of good.

Self-Deception

In a Midrash filled with insight into the human technique for self-deception and evasion, the Rabbis teach their lesson using Abraham as their subject. The Lord commanded Abraham to bring his one and only beloved son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. Abraham obeyed God's Commandment, and the Bible says: "He took and he went." ²³⁵ Appreciating what might have gone on in the mind of a father who could have misgivings about his own acceptance of God's command, the Rabbis conjecture that Satan met Abraham in the path, in the form of an old man, and tried to dissuade him, using all the arguments an old man would give to another old man. "Don't sacrifice your only son and heir. You're too old to have another son." But Abraham was determined to obey God. Satan then appeared to Isaac as a young boy, and tried to change his mind, but again to no avail. Satan then became a natural obstacle, a river across the path—but Abraham jumped into the river and was prepared to drown. ²³⁶

According to Rabbinic thought, Satan was not an objec-

tive figure; he was purely subjective. "He is Satan, he is *Yetzer Hara*,"²³⁷ the evil inclination within Abraham and Isaac themselves, within nature itself.

Even the great Abraham had within him the tendency toward self-deception and self-evasion, as the Midrash understands human ethical thinking. This all-too-human quality is one of the most powerful obstacles to righteous living.

Masked Evil and Conditioned Ethics

Amongst morally committed people, the great obstacle to ethical living is not outright evil; it is evil masked as good. Chayim Grade, a Lithuanian Yiddish poet and novelist, now living in America, in his novel *Tzemach Atlas*, points out that unmasked evil, unabashed evil, is not dangerous. An ethical person can defend himself against it. It is evil masked as good which is insidious and dangerous. What is most disarming is, "*Ven der Satan farshtelt zich in an Aron Kodesh*"—when Satan masquerades as a Holy Ark.

In political ethics, Stalin was a far more dangerous and deceptive foe than Hitler. Hitler was recognized as evil, as brutality incarnate, as cold-blooded murder in the flesh. Stalin's fiendishness was that he committed murder in the name of another morality—"working class communist morality." This new morality was to usher in ostensibly a new society based on social justice and personal freedom. In the name of this morality, murder, unjust incarceration, forced confessions and tortures, exile, forced labor were committed.

The brutality in Hungary and Tibet is similarly gruesome because its perpetrators claim a moral motivation: they are "liberating" the people from a dangerous enemy; they, the Communists, are these peoples' best friends. This is the morality of the sly fox, and extremely dangerous.

In the 19th century, Marxist thinkers distrusted law and

morality because they saw these forms of regulating society as a mask for selfish interests. There was much truth in this critique, for they hit upon the basic truth that every ethic which is man-made is, to a great extent, conditioned and determined by the environment in which it arose. Thus, Greek ethics was primarily a class ethic to be practiced by an aristocratic caste who had leisure and time to pursue contemplation, proportion and knowledge. It accepted a division of society into free men and slaves, the latter serving the former. Aristotelian ethics thus rested on slavery.

The Communist ethic is false because it liquidates those who oppose its "justice." Using the ruthlessness of the police state, it destroys all opposition and discontent. If its ethic were truly just, and if its political system were based on justice and righteousness for the people, the people in Russia need not be held under constant surveillance and in cultural isolation from the West. Obviously there is an element of deception in Marxist morality: it is just as self-seeking, just as much a mask for oppression, as the capitalist morality it loudly condemns.

In a recent issue of the *Sunday New York Times*,²³⁸ excerpts from Khrushchev's speeches were published in which he pointed to many inconsistencies and contradictions between American belief and American performance. On the other hand, he takes a public pose that in Russia and its sphere of influence there are no contradictions between Russian ideals and Russian performance. This is to ignore, for example, the bitter irony of the Russian ideal of self-determination of peoples and autonomy in the light of the brutal treatment the Hungarians received, when they tried to put this ideal into practice.

The point is: not only human beings as individuals mask their own unethical behavior. Ethical systems and historical movements also mask themselves as ethical and moral forces

for human good, when in reality they use these slogans cynically. *Der Satan farshtelt zich in an Aron Kodesh.*

Theocentric Ethics

This brings us to the need of a type of ethic which must be beyond class, beyond society, and beyond the interests of any special group to direct and influence it for its own benefit. We need an ethic which Satan, or human deception and trickery, cannot contaminate. We need an ethic which reason will not be able to twist and mold to please the will and self-interests of any person or group, any nation or class.

The modern world is fully aware of these different forces operating to undermine ethics and morality. It knows about gangster and Hitler mentality, which violates all ethical standards without any pretension to morality, and is also becoming aware of the deception played by Stalin mentality which pretends to be moral and ethical in order to achieve evil ends. Knowing this, the post-modern world needs an ethic which is untainted and uncontaminated, a morality truly objective and unconditioned.

Not only are religious thinkers aware of man's self-deception and the unreliability of man's pretension to being ethical or reasonable; psychologists, too, have analyzed the self-deception involved in rationalization, and have shown us how a person can rationalize selfishness, dishonesty and immorality as inescapable or even desirable elements of life. The power of rationalization is so thorough that on the conscious level the person, the philosopher, the sinner, is not aware of his rationalization. He really believes evil is good, and good is evil.

The individual in his personal life needs an ethic which will help him overcome self-deception; and society must be aware of the conditioned, tainted influences that creep into

moral standards and legal demands, necessitating perfect ethic to counter-balance its involvement.

The Unconditioned Torah-Ethic

Where can we find a relatively unconditioned ethic, a relatively uncontaminated ethic and morality? In our Torah! I use the qualification "relatively" because I am aware that Torah, too, in some aspects, has the human imprint upon it. Without agreeing with liberal religionists, who see little divine significance in the Torah ethic and morality, we can admit that *Dibra Torah Bilshon Bnai Adam*—the Torah speaks in the language of men, that Mosheh Rabbainu gave his own human conception of the Divine Revelation, and that in the *Kabbalah*, the human handing-down of the tradition over the centuries, some minor flaws or changes could have entered. Even with these qualifications, *the Torah remains the most nearly perfect divine ethic and morality revealed to man, now in man's possession*. This Torah ethic is the rule by which man should live.

Reason and Faith

In accepting the divine ethic, there is no need to suspend reason, no need to surrender individual acceptance and criticism. There are some believers in the divine ethic who take such a stand, insisting that man must accept the divine ethic on faith. But the cultural atmosphere of our age demands inward acceptance, and especially in America "the consent of the governed," and so stands opposed to abject surrender to divine ethic without use of reason or critical understanding. In fact, this kind of acceptance is not even Jewish: "The ignorant cannot be truly pious."²³⁹ Accordingly, we accept the most perfect divine ethic available to man and *try* to live by it with inward acceptance and understanding.

But reason, critical understanding, and inward acceptance

do not imply veto-power by man. If man should arrogate to himself the power to accept or reject the divine ethic, he denies its inherent truth. The primary factor must be the unconditioned, uncontaminated divine ethic, and not man's reason. If man's reason and understanding become the criterion, then there is no divine ethic and we are back again in the shifting sands of self-deceptive, class-conditioned, self-tainted, rationalized morality. Reason cannot be the criterion; Divinity must be the criterion. We are not asking for an abdication of reason. We want what the Jewish philosophic tradition has always demanded: revelation *and* reason—a divine ethic that is reasonable and appeals to man's understanding.

A Moral Faith in the Face of Evil

We have given one argument for the divine ethic: the self-deceptive, tainted, ability of reason to rationalize morality and ethics either out of existence or into a selfish tool for class or personal use. Our revolutionary age has given us another powerful need for the absolute, divine, unconditioned ethic.

Arthur Koestler, in a novel apocalyptically entitled *Darkness at Noon*, shows Kubitchev, the Communist who disobeyed the party line, being cross-examined by a party inquisitor using all the powerful arguments in the modernist arsenal. Kubitchev, he is told, is against progress; he is against the people; he is against the forces of history. They do not discuss with him the actual charges of which he is accused; these are not important. The party expects him to make a public confession of his guilt "in general." The book tries to explain the Trotsky trials in Russia, how public confessions of guilt were obtained from people who were innocent, and it sheds light on the whole brain-washing process which

the Communists perfected between 1937, when those trials occurred, and 1950 of the Korean War.

As often as we can, we postpone the confrontation of a moral issue. It is too uncomfortable to take a stand; we would lose friends and alienate relations. But then a time comes when we realize we *must* make the stand. Since we avoided the issue down the line, until the last moment, our defenses are gone, our position is weakened. The opposition uses all the latest artillery to undermine our moral or ethical position. The opposition is more adept in the use of historical, sociological, and philosophical arguments than we are. We are also the children of our age, sharing the immoralities, the doubts, the lack of conviction of our time. Where do we find the strength to withstand the brain-washing process of the immoral, anti-ethical forces in our culture? We find it not in reason—because the opposition seems more reasonable. We find it not in philosophy—because philosophically we cannot defend the basic ethical position. We find it not in sociology—because the devil can quote sociology (ah, that Kinsey report!). We can make our last stand for morality and ethics only upon the rock of the *divine ethic*, the unconditioned, unrationalized, untainted ethic. Believing implicitly in the truth of this ethic, we can withstand the brain-washing of the immoralities of our culture.

“Why do you expect your daughter and son to act this way?” Use all the arguments of reason, philosophy, and sociology, but if the opposition is more able and educated than you are, you are defeated. You must rather say: This is the divine ethic and therefore I adhere to it. “Why openly assert your Jewishness, when you may arouse antagonism and displeasure? You will hurt your chances for promotion. You will lose some business.” Use all the good excuses and philosophic reasons. If you begin to weaken and the opposition is faster, fall back upon the last line of defense. This is the divine

ethic. You must stay away from business on Yom Kippur because that is the core of your religious being. Your business or professional associates seem to be doing things that are against the law and against morality. Yet they are making money faster than you are. What answers can you give yourself to maintain business morality and professional ethics? None? Then say: This is a divine ethic, *God* wants me to act this way, therefore I do it. The believers and observers of ethics and morality in our age may be in the minority, but "God and I" always make a majority!

With such a commitment to a Divine Ethic, the person accepts the obligation to the ethic as a duty. The patriot says: "It's not for me to reason why, but to do and die." The religious person obeying the divine ethic says: "It is for me to reason why; but if I cannot, then it is for me *to do and live.*"

In the storm and stress of daily life, we need an ethic which can keep us on the just, righteous, and moral path. We need to avail ourselves of every resource to strengthen our convictions and to overcome the *Yetzer Hara* and all its blandishments. The rational and philosophic explanations are satisfactory, if that is all we need to keep us steadfast. But life needs convictions, down-to-earth, absolute convictions, which will keep us from faltering. In this, the divine ethic should help us, as Judah ben Tema said: "Be as strong as a leopard, light as an eagle, fleet as a deer, strong as a lion, to do the will of Thy Father who is in heaven." ²⁴⁰

Contentment and Peace

We have suggested and explained the ideal types of ethical personality: the *tzadik* is the ideal in our Jewish religious tradition, and the man of maturity is the ideal in our modern psychological tradition. Both these types of ethical personality rest upon an inner acceptance of a value system that makes for justice and righteousness.²⁴¹

The divine ethic serves as "shock troops" in emergency, when reason and understanding fail us, or when they become corrupted and tainted. Then, a humanist or man-based ethic is inadequate; man can not rely upon his own resources, and needs the Unconditioned Ethic of divine origin.

The Basis for Contentment

We possess the ethical apparatus for the good life. We have the material artifacts to enjoy a comfortable life. *Why then is there no moral purpose to life?* Why have we yielded to a spiritual-emotional preoccupation with things, with gadgets, with appearances and externalities? Why is our age serving the morality of materialism? Why has our youth, in particular, lost their social idealism, their spirit of reform, their *Sturm and Drang* for a better world?

The fundamental question of morals turns upon whether man can achieve the good life by pursuing his desires and satisfying them, or whether he must first learn to desire the right kind of ethical happiness. The traditional view was that man must learn to civilize his desires, keep them to what is ethical and proper. Since desires are limitless and man can never satisfy them all, he must learn to discriminate among them and to control them. The basis of discrimination must be that in satisfying his desires, man must not violate the ethical, cultural, and religious demands of his divine soul.

Man is entitled to a basic satisfaction of his physical needs; but pampering them or catering primarily to them would distract man from his real needs, and ultimately lead to immoral behavior.

Unlimited Desire

Let us quote again from Rabbi Moses Hayim Luzzatto: "It is surely permitted to eat or drink anything that is not forbidden by the dietary laws. Yet filling oneself with food (beyond the minimum physical needs) brings on licentiousness; and drinking wine (beyond the minimum requirements) leads to lust and other evils. When a man gets into the habit of eating and drinking heartily, he is in distress if he happens to miss his regular meal. He will enter into the most arduous transactions and moneymaking schemes in order to maintain the kind of table to which he is accustomed. Thus result dishonesty and greed, which are followed by false swearing and all other sins that go with it, to say nothing of the neglect of the ritual duties, of the study of the Torah, and of prayer. Yet he would have been free from all these sins had he not allowed himself to be lured by the love of pleasure."

About clothing he says: "The Torah prescribes no laws against the wearing of exquisite garments or ornaments. Yet who does not know that wearing gorgeous garments or embroidered apparel gives rise to pride and borders upon lust, to say nothing of the jealousy, covetousness, and oppression that are involved in the price one has to pay for things that are costly. In short, since all worldly affairs are a source of great spiritual danger, is not that man worthy of praise who seeks to escape them and to have as little to do with them as possible?" ²⁴²

Luzzatto realizes that man's desires are unlimited once he has gone beyond the basic necessities. Constant fulfillment of

these desires would lead man on a merry chase. Spending most of his time earning the money to pay for his expensive tastes, spending the rest of his time in pursuit of excessive pleasure, fun making, and enjoyment of all possible desires and things—when does such a man have time to study Torah, to perform good ethical deeds, to devote himself to God? This man is so preoccupied with money, fun, clothes, and things that little time is left for ethical, cultural, and religious pursuits.

Desires are for all practical purposes unlimited and unsatiable, and therefore any morality which does not recognize the necessity of putting restraints upon desire is inherently absurd. Basic to any morality is a standard for limiting ourselves as to how many desires we will pursue, and which ones, and how long we will pursue them.

Morality of Contentment

The Ethics of the Fathers emphasizes the morality of contentment. "Who is rich? He who is content with his lot." ²⁴³ Riches does not mean material things, but a peace of mind and the mental and emotional concentration on ethical, cultural, and religious pleasures. If a man is dissatisfied with his financial and physical lot, he seeks ways to improve it, spends time, energy, and thought upon this goal. In the meantime he neglects his social, ethical, cultural, and religious responsibilities and opportunities.

The Talmud relates this legend: Alexander the Great reached the gates of Paradise and knocked on the door, demanding admission. He was told "This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter in it." ²⁴⁴ Alexander the Great declared that though he couldn't enter, they should remember that he was king and should give him a token for remembrance. He was given an eye socket with an open eye in it. This he placed on one scale, and on the other scale

much silver and gold. The scale with the eye upon it overbalanced the other. Alexander piled all his gold and silver on the scale, but in vain; the eye was still heavier. Upon asking his sages for an explanation of this peculiar phenomenon, he was told that this was the eye of a man who was never satisfied with what he had, who always looked for more. They advised him to close the eye and put some earth on it. He did so. Soon the scale with the eye on it rose upward. The ever-open eye is never satisfied, and nothing can weight it down.²⁴⁵

To be content with our lot does not mean that Rabbinic morality wanted man to forsake ambition and renounce this world. Our Rabbis taught: "A man will be held accountable to God for refusing to enjoy the things that he is permitted to enjoy."²⁴⁶ "Whoever observes a fast which is not prescribed by law is called a sinner."²⁴⁷ The rabbis opposed asceticism, but they did not favor materialism. For them, the morality of asceticism and the morality of materialism were both wrong. They wanted man to live with the Torah ethic, to enjoy this life, but not at the expense of the more important areas of human endeavor: ethical living, cultural pursuits, religious experience.

Any undue consumption of time for pursuits of life which take man away from the higher pursuits of life is immoral and to be condemned. This imbalance of time distribution between the spiritual, ethical, and cultural pursuits on the one hand, and the economic and biological pursuits on the other hand, is the immorality of materialism. Man must desire those things in life which better enable him to pursue the ethical, cultural, and spiritual values.

Surplus Man-Hours

The public relations men of modern industry point out the great contrast between life today and life fifty or twenty-

five years ago. They make the point that despite inflation and higher costs of living, the real wage and real take-home pay is more today than in the past. How do they prove this?

It once took "x-plus-a" man-hours of labor to buy a pair of shoes. Today it takes only "x" man-hours of labor to buy the same pair of shoes (a saving of "a" man-hours). It took "y-plus-b" man-hours of labor to buy a suit of clothes. Today it takes only "y" man-hours of labor (a saving of "b" man-hours). It took "z-plus-c" man-hours of labor to buy a house. Today it takes "z" (a saving of "c" man-hours). Hence, the average citizen has extra "a-plus-b-plus-c" man-hours of labor on his hands. What is he doing with this surplus time? Fifty years ago, a man operated his grocery store six days a week from dawn to midnight, yet had time for synagogue, a Bible class, and Sabbath worship. What is the average person doing today?

With his "big eye" he sees more; his gold and silver cannot keep up with his eyes. His extra man-hours of labor—"a-plus-b-plus-c"—now are spent for "more house" or "more clothes," "more car" or "more gadgets." He has *less* time than ever for Shul, *davening*, Bible study, reading, family life.

The Need for Dialogue

The jutting bulk of materialism thus blocks all avenues to ethical and moral living. And now I shall cite a composite case history to make my point; it is fictional, and modified so that you cannot recognize its actual sources.

Composite Case History

The family is prosperous, has grown up children, is able to enjoy life. But the husband and the wife are far apart. It happens they are both moral people, so they do not seek companionship away from wedlock. They are miserable with

each other. The husband says to the wife, "Go to a psychiatrist." She protests: "I'm not a psycho." Yet she goes to the psychiatrist for a while, but he cannot help her. What she needs the psychiatrist cannot give her. She wants her husband's respect and admiration; somehow this is gone. He wants her to be happy with their two cars, fine home, nice children—and without his respect and love. She feels lonely and unloved, like a "fifth wheel to a wagon." Whatever these people had between them when they married is now gone. *They have wealth and prestige, but have lost each other.*

What happened between this very fine and unhappy couple, I cannot describe. I did not know them when they were growing apart. But what might have happened, I can guess. I can see it happening today to young couples who are now "on the make." The "a-plus-b-plus-c" man-hours of surplus time are spent in more work and more play, but not with wife and children. They are not spent in the quiet, peaceful atmosphere of home and friends. These men do not sit in a discussion group with the rabbi to evaluate the direction of their lives. They never make a computation of the man-hours they spend on working to make money as compared with the man-hours given to self-improvement, to cultural and religious pursuits.

Words and Understanding

A great principle and area of ethics is *Shmiras Haloshon*—guarding one's language. The great saint of the last generation was called *Chofetz Chayim*. This name comes from a verse in Psalms: "What man is he that delighteth in life, *Chofetz Chayim*, and loveth the many days that he may be good? Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile." ²⁴⁸ How to speak to a person was of major importance to the *Chofetz Chayim*. His whole book entitled *Chofetz Chayim* is devoted to a consideration of how to avoid vicious

gossip, dangerous rumor mongering, and defamation of character—common pastimes in which we all indulge.

How many of us have thought about how important it is to be careful of how we speak to wife or husband? I know fine women who are in eternal fear of their husband's anger, and upright husbands who fear to be exposed by their tongue-lashing wives, who demoniacally hit below the belt. In this era of human relations, when the dialogue between people is emphasized, how many couples actually participate in a heart-to-heart dialogue? I know of many couples who exchange words with each other. But these exchanges are *monologues*, which are thrown at one another. There is no attempt to listen, to understand, to react to the other person's meanings.

To take part in a dialogue takes time. The dialogue between two individual souls is an art. It takes effort to cultivate and perfect this art. It does not come naturally, although each soul or personality is hungry for this dialogue with the other.

Mature Love

In an age deluged by sex symbols, we do not understand the depth of love. Love is basically an effort at togetherness. Many believe in the romantic fallacy that love is a mysterious visitation. It flies in like Puck, through the window; and then capriciously flies out. This fallacy rests upon immaturity and adolescent irresponsibility.

Love, compatibility, is a process, not an accident. Love and compatibility depend upon the maturing and molding of desire, upon the acceptance of change in each person, upon the sacredness of the differences between persons, and upon the mutual concern as lovers and participants in a perpetual dialogue.

And this takes man-hours!

To undertake such an approach to marriage implies that we accept the Biblical ethic, that the human personality is holy, that it is created in God's image and is never expendable, must never be exploited. Husband and wife must treat each other as partners in *Kiddushin*, in sanctity and holiness. Husband and wife must be prepared to give as much intellectual and emotional effort to marriage as they do for any other economic or social endeavor. "*Torah He Velilmod Ani Tzarich.*"—"Married life is a knowledge and it must be studied." ²⁴⁹

Life can be beautiful. We are living in an age when, in America at least, poverty rarely exists. Anyone with a minimum of ability and skill can live properly. There are gradations in our society and different levels of status, judged by the externalities we use and consume. But basically the *quality*, the essence of life does not change if one drives a \$2000 car or a \$5000 car. The inward quality of life is not different if one lives in a \$50,000 home or in a \$20,000 home.

But there is a vast difference between homes where one family maintains the dialogue between husband and wife, where love and understanding flower in beauty and harmony, and when another family finds husband and wife living in isolation and loneliness, seeking to escape each other's suspicious, doubting gaze. There is a vast difference between a creative life devoted to charity, reading, study, cultural appreciation, and a futile life spent in boredom, physical lust, insecurity, loneliness.

How can we appreciate the need to find spiritual fulfillment in prayer, in devotion to God, in love of neighbor, when many of us are so involved in a spiritual-emotional binge of materialism that we neglect our own wife and child, neglect our own soul?

Before we can feel the uplifting of a dialogue with God, we must first discover the liberating experience of a dialogue

with our spouse and children. If we do not devote time and attention to those we love *here and now*, our own wives and children, how can we devote time and attention to a "neighbor" who lives outside our walls—or to God, whose spiritual distance from the here and now is so great? If a man does not listen and talk to his own wife, how can he listen to the call of God and answer it?

Man and Himself

The external props for peace and contentment are available to us, in abundance. But modern man must learn to discipline his desire and to civilize it. Let him be content with the externalities fate has bestowed upon him. Let him begin, instead, an inward quest. The primary concern of man is man himself. Let him turn his attention upon himself, upon his wife and children. Let us begin to enjoy even our material pleasures not as gluttons, as licentious fools, who expect to derive spiritual satisfaction from material things. This is the curse of all *nouveaux riche*. Let us enjoy our physical pleasures for what they are—physical pleasure and not spiritual satisfaction. As we discover our own soul, that seeks to converse with other souls in other human beings, in true dialogue, we will develop our capacity for true *inner* peace and contentment. With the assurance that our physical needs are cared for, we can now develop ourselves culturally, socially, and spiritually. We have the opportunity of discovering ourselves by ourselves.

As long as man lived under the threat of hunger and in the insecurity of need and want, he had difficulty turning his back upon physical need and concentrating on human or divine dialogue. Only the greatest souls could accomplish this in the face of physical need and privation. Modern man lives in a society of affluence; his physical necessities are as-

sured. Now, for the first time in history, every man has the opportunity to devote himself to himself. Man need no longer live as an animal and drudge away his days. Now he can live as a man, true to the image of God in himself.

Why should a man waste his time over-filling his belly when his soul has atrophied for the lack of use and self-awareness? Why should a man derive a foolish satisfaction of status by exhibiting a material symbol when his wife and children feel misunderstood and neglected? Why should a mature person even seek the gaudy, brassy, tinny, loud externalities of life? Rather, let us discover ourselves. Let us discover our wives. Let us talk to our friends—in real dialogue. Let us seek God and talk to Him. Let us listen to God as He talks to us.

How do we acquire peace and contentment? *The Ethics of the Fathers* sums it up succinctly: ²⁵⁰ "Ben Zoma said: 'Who is wise? He who learns from all men; as it is said, From all my teachers I have gotten understanding. Who is mighty? He who subdues his passions; as it is said, He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth over his spirit than he that taketh a city. *Who is rich?* He who rejoices in his portion; as it is said, When thou eatest the labor of thine hands, happy art thou, and it shall be well with thee; happy art thou in this world, and it shall be well with thee in the world to come.' "

Notes

The Authentic Jew

The Inauthentic Jew

1. *Megillot*. V. 12, p. 74, May 1953
2. *The Jew and the Anti-Semite*, Jean Paul Sartre, p. 136
3. Exodus. 19:6
4. *T. B. Nedarim 11 a

The Authentic Jew

5. Psalms 79:10
6. Genesis 22:2
7. Genesis 22:12
8. Psalms 118:17
9. Genesis 22:16, 17, 18

The Road to Authentic Judaism

10. *Franz Rosenzweig*, Nahum Glatzer, p. 25
11. Isaiah 58:6, 7
12. Genesis 3:9
13. Nedarim 5 a
14. *Franz Rosenzweig*, Nahum Glatzer, pp. 140, 141

What is Authentic Judaism?

15. Zohar, Acharai Mos. 73
16. Psalms 19:2

17. Siddur, *Shacharis*; Midrash, quoted by Chayim Greenberg in article, *Megillot* V. 12, p. 66, May 1953
18. *Aurora Leigh*, Elizabeth Browning, Bk. VII, L. 820
19. Genesis 1:1
20. Psalms 145:18
21. Gen. Rabba; also *Legends of the Jews*, Ginsburg, V. III, p. 81
22. Shevuos 39 a
23. Siddur, prayer for *Rosh Chodesh*

Jewish Ritual

The Jewish Way: Ritual and Golah

24. Leviticus 18:4, Sifra *ad hoc*
25. *The Responsa*, Solomon B. Freehof; p. 14
26. *Psycho-analysis and Religion*, Eric Fromm, p. 108
27. *I Maccabees* 1:45-49
28. *Psycho-analysis and Religion*, pp. 110-111

The Sanctification of Life

29. Leviticus 19:2
30. *Oros Yisroel*, p. 40
31. Berachos 28 a
32. Deuteronomy 8:3

* T.B. All Talmudic references are in Talmud Bavli (Babylonian), unless stated otherwise.

The Sanctification of Life (cont.)

- 33. Exodus 6:9
- 34. Leviticus 23:4
- 35. Hertz, Siddur, p. 47
- 36. *Ibid.* p. 45

Glorification of God; Ritual and Piety

- 37. Ethics of the Fathers 4:2
- 38. Exodus 15:2
- 39. Hertz Siddur, p. 416
- 40. Shabbos 133 a
- 41. Sifra, Vayikra, 20:26; see Rashi *ad hoc*
- 42. Deuteronomy 10:12; Micah 6:8
- 43. Deuteronomy 6:5
- 44. Ethics of the Fathers 1:2

Uniqueness of Man—Ritual in Man's Life

- 45. Genesis 1:26, 27, 28
- 46. Ethics of the Fathers 1:14
- 47. Exodus 13:2 and 15
- 48. Genesis 2:24
- 49. Kedushin 30 b

Prayer

American Judaism Without Prayer

- 50. Deuteronomy 11:13
- 51. Ta-anis 2 a
- 52. Hosea 8:14

The Human Need For Prayer

- 53. Rashi *ad hoc*, Genesis 1:1

The Art of Prayer

- 54. Berachos 28 b

- 55. Yerushalmi, Berachos Chap. V, p. 2
- 56. Psalms 19:2; 90:2; 147:4
- 57. Quoted in Hertz Siddur, p. 61
- 58. Numbers 12:7 and 8
- 59. Berachos 10 a
- 60. Rambam, *Yad Hachazakah*, *Hilchos Tfilah* 4:15
- 61. Psalms 145:18

A Life With Prayer

- 62. Exodus 20:9, 10
- 63. Hertz Siddur, pp. 278, 280
- 64. See *Maharshah* Berachos 10 a
- 65. Reb Yisroel Salanter's anecdotes emphasize this tendency and our need to overcome it
- 66. Hertz Siddur, p. 452
- 67. Berachos 17 a

Halachah

Understanding of Halachah

- 68. Jeremiah 18:18
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The Jewish Conception of God
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